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ABSTRACT

Serving as a vehicle for raising the profile of and thereby gaining recognition for the important research and development work being conducted in Canada in support of children and families, the "Research Connections Canada" series compiles research and/or development papers as well as background papers, analytical literature reviews, and essays. This issue of the series focuses on early childhood practitioner training and professionalism. The papers are as follows: (1) "Strengthening Identity: Training Program Accreditation, Practitioner Certification, and Their Application to Early Childhood Care and Education" (Don Ogston), looking at the accreditation and certification practices of other occupations to identify the purposes, processes, and consequences for early childhood care and education; (2) "Professionalism and Quality" (Marilynn Kuhn), examining "professionalism" in the early childhood field and outlining steps generally taken toward becoming a profession; (3) "Professionalism in a Post-Modern Era: Thoughts on Early Childhood Education" (Alan R. Pence), providing a broader context for the early childhood education community's discussion of professionalization; (4) "Mobility of Early Childhood Care and Education Credits and Credentials in Canada" (Jane Beach and Jane Bertrand), examining the transferability, articulation, and portability of early childhood care and education post-secondary education credentials and credits within and among Canada's provinces and territories; (5) "Sensitivities in Processes of Peer Assessment of Training Programs in Caring Professions" (Barbara Thomas), assessing a range of sensitivities or concerns affecting early childhood educational/training programs, and proposing a process of program review based on peer assessment; and (6) "Why Focus on Children? Environmental Contaminants and the Special Susceptibility of Children" (Sandra Schwartz and Graham Chance), discussing why children are more vulnerable than adults to environmental hazards, examining specific hazards, and stressing the need to affirm the Precautionary Principle in the development of Canadian

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Research Connections
CANADA

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Research Connections

CANADA

Supporting
Children and Families

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Research Connections Canada: Supporting Children and Families

Research Connections Canada is a bilingual publication series published by the Canadian Child Care Federation and funded by Child Care Visions, Human Resources Development Canada. The series is an anthology of current Canadian early childhood research and development papers.

This professional publication serves as a vehicle for raising the profile of and thereby gaining recognition for the important research and development work which is being conducted currently in Canada, including that being done under Child Care Visions, Human Resources Development Canada.

Research Connections Canada includes research and/or development papers as well as background papers, analytical literature reviews and essays. This publication series is of particular interest to training programs (at both college and university levels), academics, researchers, policy makers and licensing and regulatory agencies.

Research Connections Canada is guided by an editorial committee. However, the papers represent the opinions of the authors and should not be considered to reflect the opinions of the Editorial Committee, the publisher or the funder. Papers are presented essentially as submitted by the authors; there is no substantive edit or fact-checking. There is currently no peer-review process.

One copy of each issue of the series is distributed free of charge to an identified distribution network including: libraries in colleges and universities that offer training in early childhood care and education; government child care departments; national organizations in the health and social services sector; and provincial/territorial organizations with a focus on early childhood.

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Strengthening Identity

Training Program Accreditation, Practitioner Certification and Their Application to Early Childhood Care and Education

by Don Ogston

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Abstract

As Canadian child care services have grown in number and diversity, the quality of interaction between children and their caregivers has become a matter of concern. The most commonly reported determinant of the quality of care is the competence of the caregiver and competence is frequently described in terms of caregiver education. This paper looks at the accreditation and certification practices of other occupations to identify the purposes, processes and consequences for early childhood care and education (ECCE) educational institutions and the occupation as a whole. Recommendations are made for an evolution toward accreditation and certification systems by institutions and practitioner associations.

Introduction

Occupational standards state the expected proficiency of the people performing the work of an occupation. Standards are developed to improve the skills and training levels of the workforce. They provide benchmarks against which occupations and people in them are assessed. Occupational standards imply evaluation of the quality required of practitioners and the services they provide; they are part of the quality assurance process.[1]

The assurance of the quality of Canadian child care services has been a matter of concern and urgency, as services have grown in number and diversity. The dimensions of concern, while variable, are intimately related to the quality of the interaction between children and their caregivers and the resulting development of the children. A range of environmental factors have been shown to affect this interaction and its child development outcomes. However, the most commonly reported determinant of the quality of care is the competence of the caregiver. Competence is most frequently, but not exclusively, described in terms of the education of the caregiver. Thus, caregiver education in child development and early childhood education is found to be associated with quality child care.[2]

Post-secondary education is the usual way the necessary knowledge, skills and experiences are acquired to practise an occupation. The Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC) and the Canadian Child Care Federation (CCCF) recognized mutual interests in the quality of education provided to students of early childhood care and education. Both organizations seek:
- consistent quality of training across institutions;
- coordinated sharing of best practices and innovation among institutions;
- greater accessibility of ECCE courses;
- the portability of educational credits;
- improved career mobility and options; and
- validation of the competence of ECCE graduates.

The ACCC and CCCF formed a partnership to conduct a multidimensional study of post-secondary ECCE education programs and identify means of achieving these ends. The study was funded by Child Care Visions, Human Resources and Development Canada. The dimensions of study include:
- common elements and capacities of ECCE education in Canada;
- Canadian models of ECCE education and training;
- best ECCE training practices;
- potential models for the accreditation of ECCE training programs; and
- potential models for the certification of people providing ECCE services.

This paper focuses on whether the accreditation and certification models of other occupations have application in the education and practice of the occupation of early childhood care and education. Various models' purposes, processes and consequences are examined.

Study Methods

Accreditation and certification are two of a number of processes validating the practices of occupations. Validation may focus on the curriculum and experience required to prepare their practitioners, the competencies of those practitioners and/or the characteristics of the settings of practice of the occupation. The first step in the study of accreditation and certification processes was to position them within a larger validation framework. Literature on professionalism and occupational practices was reviewed to identify a framework of validation measures and to summarize rationales for these measures.

The second step was to identify the accreditation and certification practices of a range of occupations. Information on their practices was obtained through extensive Internet searches, a literature review and e-mail, telephone and personal contacts with officials of associations having accreditation and/or certification programs.

The occupations studied were selected to canvass a range of considerations:
- the dominant gender of the occupation, recognizing that the vast majority of ECCE practitioners are women;[3]
- comparable levels of formal education and forms of professional development possessed by and available to ECCE practitioners;
- comparability of the occupation's education ladder to that of the ECCE sector;
- lessons that may be learned from occupations' accreditation and/or certification practices; and
- lessons that may be learned from current trends and innovations in their practices.

The third step was to synthesize the information and assess various approaches to accreditation and/or certification. The fourth step was to expose the results of the preceding steps and preliminary thinking about directions on accreditation and certification to the Steering Committee of the ACCC-CCCF project and the Membership Council of the CCCF. The members of the committee and council acted as "key informants" to advise the study on the expectations of and readiness for accreditation and certification within ECCE training institutions and the occupation.

The final step in the study was to identify considerations in the adoption of accreditation and/or certification processes. Recommendations are made to the ACCC and CCCF on evolution toward accreditation and certification systems by institutions and practitioners associations.

Definitions

Occupational validation processes have generated a variety of specialized terms. The Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials has published a guide to terms,[4] which can be found on the Internet at http://www.cmec.ca/ciccic.

Accreditation

"Accreditation" is a system for recognizing professional education programs for a level of performance, integrity and quality that entitles them to the confidence of the profession, educational community and the public they serve. Accreditation status signifies that the program meets established and nationally acceptable standards of scope, quality and relevance.

In Canada, accreditation is associated with a professional program of study offered by a post-secondary educational institution and not with the institution itself. (In the United States, accreditation may be separately awarded to educational institutions and to their professional programs of study.) Accreditation is a voluntary process of review and evaluation. The program and institution invite review of the program by an external, non-governmental, non-educational agency that represents the profession.

A full discussion of accreditation appears later in this paper. Briefly, accreditation begins with an invitation by the program to the accreditation agency to review the program. The agency defines the program information that the faculty and institution are to develop for review. The information is provided to the accreditation agency for study by a team of professionals. The accreditation team visits the institution to clarify and augment the information on the program and institutional supports. The team provides a report to the program for comment and clarification. The team report is finalized and recommendations are made to the agency regarding the accreditation of the program.

Certification

"Certification" is a system for recognizing individuals' level of education, experience and/or competence to practise an occupation with the confidence of the occupation and the public. Certification status signifies that the individual meets established occupational standards of knowledge, skills and abilities to perform the tasks of the occupation.

Certification may or may not be voluntary. For many occupations, the law requires that only those individuals who are certified may hold themselves out to the public as a practitioner of an occupation. In occupations such as engineering, individuals may possess all of the qualifications necessary to practise but do not become certified. In such cases, the individuals may work under the supervision of a certified practitioner but may not hold themselves out to the public as a professional practitioner.

Many occupations are self-regulating. They have either been granted this status by legislation or have assumed it themselves to define their practitioners to the public. When self-regulation is legislated, certification is usually mandatory. When self-regulation is self-mandated by an occupation, certification is usually voluntary.

Certification may be awarded by government agencies, government-designated agencies at arm's length from occupational organizations, arm's length agencies established by occupational organizations or occupational organizations themselves. The terms of designation to practise the occupation may be "licensed," "certified" or "registered."

A full discussion of certification appears later in this paper. Briefly, certification begins with an application by an individual to the appropriate agency for certification through the presentation of citizenship and educational credentials. Supporting information on work experience may also be required. Depending upon the certification regime, certification may be awarded upon the presentation of these credentials. Most often, acceptable credentials merely establish candidacy, with certification only being awarded upon the successful completion of a qualifying examination. In some occupations, candidacy is continued through a post-examination period of supervised experience. The certification agency grants certification upon the acceptable demonstration of its educational, experience and/or examination requirements.

Occupational Validation Framework

The validation of an occupation, its required training, practitioners and settings begins with the statement of occupational standards. Standards describe the abilities of people in the occupation; that is, what they are able to do. Knowing the requisite abilities leads to the specification of their necessary knowledge and skills, the tasks that practitioners are able to perform and how well the tasks are performed. In turn, these have been designated "skills and knowledge standards," "task standards" and performance standards."[5] By extension, these standards may be elaborated as the educational requirements for the occupation, the bases of recognition of individuals' abilities to practise the occupation and as the standards of its practice.

These linkages assure the quality of the services provided by the occupation. When stated with varying degrees of precision, occupational standards may be variously used as the bases of:

- the accreditation of training;
- the certification of workers;
- the accreditation of sites where an occupation is practised;
- standards of service and practice;
- job descriptions;
- job classification and compensation;
- worker performance evaluation;
- recruitment and promotion of workers.

Among Canadian occupations, the practice of medicine probably has the most comprehensive quality assurance framework. The profession is based upon an organized body of knowledge that is the basis of its occupational standards and their continuous renewal. Its training is only recognized when obtained from programs accredited by the profession to provide medical education. Graduates must present requisite education and experience for the approval of the profession to obtain certification to practise. The institutions of its service are accredited by their peers and the profession as providing facilities necessary for the practice of medicine. and these elements of validation are contained in legislation.

In the case of medicine (and most professions), quality assurance processes are administered by the profession, which is the gatekeeper of entry to its practice. Across occupations, entry is controlled in a variety of ways. In some, there are no entry requirements (e.g., sales clerk). Some occupations require experience-based apprenticeship (e.g., cabinet making). Some require particular education, sometimes post-secondary (e.g., dietician), sometimes from institutions chartered by government to provide the education (e.g., school teacher) and sometimes offered by the occupation or industry (e.g., general accountant).

Increasingly, occupations have been accrediting programs of study. Sometimes, graduation is entry to the occupation (e.g., information processing technician). Sometimes, subsequent experience and certification by the occupation are the bases of entry (e.g., architectural technologist).

Many occupations require the demonstration of competency for certification. Sometimes, competency is demonstrated through the presentation of examples of work (e.g., geomatics technologist), frequently verified by experienced practitioners. Examinations of requisite knowledge and skills are most common (e.g., practical nursing assistant). And sometimes, the demonstration of competency is based on a combination of these indicators (e.g., financial planner).

Most occupations with quality assurance processes certify the practitioner on the basis of education and/or experience. Certification may be by government agencies (most frequently as the licensing of apprenticeship trades), by government-mandated agencies (e.g., Ontario College of Psychologists), by the occupation pursuant to enabling legislation (e.g., chartered accountants) or by industry (e.g., pharmaceutical manufacturers' representatives).

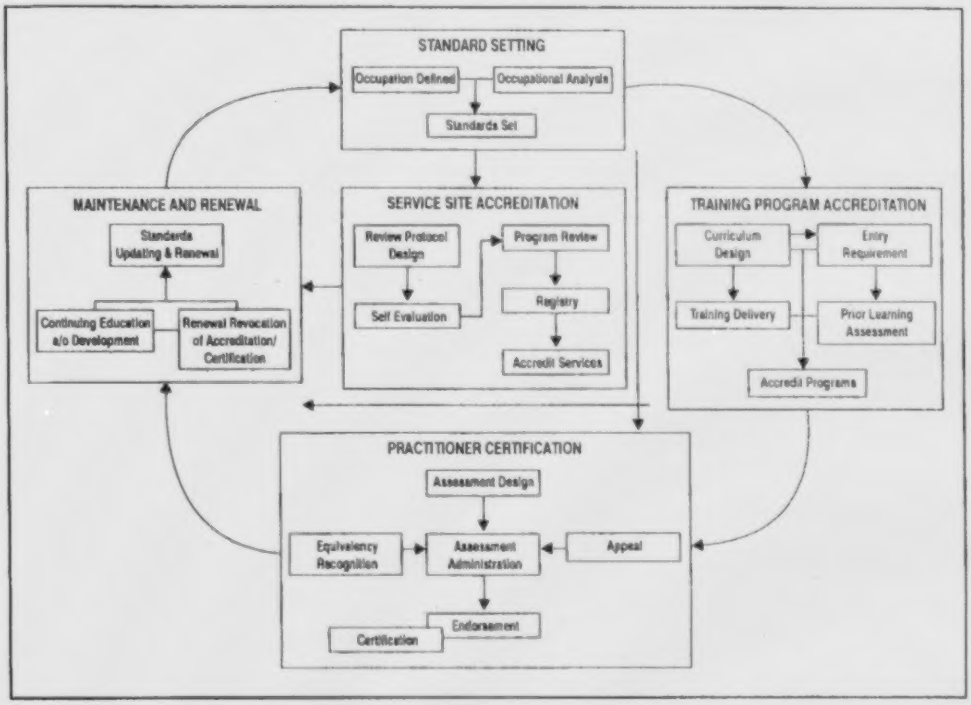
There are many models of occupational quality assurance and across occupations, these models are variable, comprehensive and complex. The complexity has been reduced to essential common elements. Figure 1 shows the relationships and interdependence of validation processes applied to training, practitioners and service settings in an Occupational Validation Framework, adapted from a federal government illustration.[6]

This framework summarizes processes in service site accreditation and is intended to show that the approval process for service sites follows directly from and influences processes of setting occupational standards.

The Occupational Validation Framework may be viewed as a comprehensive system to assure the standards of an occupation, the programs that educate its practitioners, the practitioners themselves and the settings in which practitioners provide services. Alternatively, the framework may be viewed as a composite of three separate systems of quality assurance:

FIGURE 1

OCCUPATIONAL VALIDATION FRAMEWORK


STANDARD SETTING
Occupation Defined
Occupational Analysis
Standards Set
MAINTENANCE AND RENEWAL
Standards Updating & Renewal
Continuing Education a/o Development
Renewal Revocation of Accreditation/ Certification
SERVICE SITE ACCREDITATION
Review Protocol Design
Program Review
Registry
Self Evaluation
Accredit Services
TRAINING PROGRAM ACCREDITATION
Curriculum Design
Entry Requirement
Training Delivery
Prior Learning Assessment
Accredit Programs
PRACTITIONER CERTIFICATION
Assessment Design
Equivalency Recognition
Assessment Administration
Appeal
Endorsement
Certification

- accrediting training programs;
- certifying practitioners; and
- accrediting service settings.

Common to any view of the framework is the involvement of processes to set occupational standards and maintain and renew them within the occupation. Fundamental to the framework is the setting of standards.

Standard Setting

Standard setting first requires definition of the occupation and then analysis of the pertinent knowledge, skills, abilities and task and performance levels of its practitioners. The people who are in the occupation, their employers, the people who educate them and the organizations that represent them define and analyze the occupation. Its boundaries may be

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wide or narrow in distinguishing it from other occupations. The more precise the analyses, the more guidance that is provided in assuring the quality of practitioner services.

The definition and analyses may be expressed in legislation prescribing government certification of the occupation, in legislation permitting self-regulation by the occupation or the occupation may self-mandate and self-regulate. Prescriptive legislation is most frequent when there is an apparent need for public health, safety and protection. Permissive legislation assumes a high degree of affiliation among the people in the occupation to assure that the public interest is protected. "Affiliation" refers to practitioner, program and/or service site memberships in organizations and associations. The degree of affiliation may refer to the proportion of them that are members and/or the concentration of their memberships in relatively few organizations. For example, a high degree of affiliation would exist if upwards of 75 per cent are members of an organization or if there was a single organization per jurisdiction. Self-mandated, self-regulating occupations also require high degrees of affiliation among practitioners to ensure consistent and effective services.

Training Program Accreditation

Programs of study to train practitioners operationalize occupational standards as learning outcomes and the curricula that will produce them. There has to be close correspondence between the occupational standards and the curriculum and delivery of training to assure quality. The conceptual and experiential contents of the curriculum must be seen to lead to the acquisition and demonstration of requisite knowledge, skills, tasks and performance of the occupation. Similarly, the people admitted to programs of study must be seen to possess the educational and personal foundations necessary to master the curriculum.

Accreditation recognizes training programs that are consistent with and will produce practitioners who meet the occupational standards. To that end, accreditation criteria are defined and accreditation is usually granted by the occupation itself. While accreditation processes require that the faculty and staff of programs and institutions seeking accreditation must review the program against the occupational standards, it is representatives of the occupation (not government or other educational institutions) who ultimately decide whether the programs meet those standards.

The review of programs against standards may focus on one or more of:
- credentials and competence of the faculty;
- facilities, supports and resources of the program and institution;
- rationale of the program and its relation to content and experiences;
- curriculum and course documentation;
- methods and measures of student evaluation; and
- performance of graduates.

Practitioner Certification

The certification of practitioners of an occupation is the most direct application of occupational standards. The fundamental expression of occupational standards is through its practitioners' abilities, competence and performance. It is the practitioner who represents the occupation in serving the public. Thus, the occupation is dependent upon its practitioners to assure the quality of its services.

At a minimum, practitioners may be certified on the basis of their education alone. At a maximum, certification is based upon education, experience, formal examination of competence and commendation by certified practitioners.

Typically, the occupation translates its certification criteria from its occupational standards. An exception may be where government is the agency of certification (usually as a licence to practise). Such agencies are ultimately responsible for the criteria of licensure. However, in most cases these agencies are guided in stating the criteria of certification by advisory bodies of representatives of the occupation.

Organizational bodies of the occupation (associations, boards, councils, etc.) are the most frequent certification authorities pursuant to legislation permitting their authority over the occupation. These bodies design the criteria and methods of assessment and specify the credentials that may be accepted as equivalent to and which meet the criteria. The certification authorities administer the assessment processes, including the processes of appeal from candidates who may not be granted certification. Ultimately, they endorse candidates as meeting certification criteria and grant practitioner certification.

Service Site Accreditation

Relatively few occupations provide their services within accredited sites. When they do, it is to assure that the sites are suitable, have requisite facilities for the practice of the occupation and that practitioners adhere to standards of practice in providing services. Many occupations are practised within licensed premises or operate under a business licence. Such licensing is not usually pursuant to occupational standards. Rather, it is to identify the sites as subject to public (e.g., restaurants) and environmental (e.g., service stations) health inspections and/or subject to commercial taxation.

Service site accreditation can be mandatory or voluntary. Mandatory accreditation may be required by legislation as a condition of a facility charter (e.g., hospitals) or pursuant to regulation where sites are licensed to provide services (e.g., child care centres). When mandatory, service site accreditation may be delegated to the occupation. There are few occupations that perform voluntary service site accreditation. The most common are those that are practised in laboratories where the management of hazardous materials and processes and precise instrumentation is required.

In many respects, service site accreditation is comparable to training program accreditation. Service site accreditation recognizes service programs that are consistent with and will produce the results set out in occupational standards. Accreditation criteria are defined and accreditation is usually granted by the occupation itself. While service site accreditation processes require that the staff of programs seeking accreditation review the program against standards of practice, it is representatives of the occupation and other accredited sites that ultimately decide whether the services meet those standards. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) sponsors the best-known North American child care accreditation system for centre-based services. Its processes correspond closely to those described in this paper.[7]

The review of services against standards may focus on the:
- credentials and competence of staff;
- facilities and resources of the service site;
- appropriateness of service processes and procedures; and
- governance and administration of the service.

Maintenance and Renewal

Quality assurance is an iterative process, whether the focus is on training, practitioners or service sites. The body of knowledge upon which the occupation is based is constantly expanding. Educators, practitioners and services continually identify the limitations of current standards, better practices and changes in the demands of the workplace that commend updating and renewal of occupational standards.

Quality assurance is dynamic. The standards of training and continuing competence of practitioners and service practices have to be periodically brought in line with new knowledge about the occupation. Consequently, the elements of the occupational validation framework are constantly adapting to this new knowledge with renewed occupational, accreditation and certification standards.

ECCE Prospects

The occupational validation framework of an occupation represents the ways in which it sets and revises its standards of practitioner knowledge and skills and their application in practice. Some occupations have a full regime of accreditation and certification processes within their occupational validation frameworks. Some focus exclusively on the competence of their practitioners as the expression of their standards of practice. Some focus on the education of their practitioners as inferring their competence to follow standards of practice. Relatively few occupations focus on the site of service as the point of assuring quality.

It is noteworthy that child care is one of the few occupations that formally bases quality assurance on the service site. The mechanism of quality assurance across jurisdictions is the regulations governing the licensing requirements of child care services. This largely reflects the fact that the practitioners of the occupation have not taken it upon themselves or been granted the authority by governments to set the standards and administer processes of quality assurance; that is, to self-regulate.

However, elements of self-regulation are evolving within the child care sector. British Columbia, Ontario, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland are in various stages of granting legislative recognition of child care as a profession. Early childhood education associations in Alberta, Ontario and Nova Scotia have certification processes in place.[8] CCCF statements on quality child care[9] and ECCE training[10] and an occupational competency analysis in British Columbia[11] are reasonable inputs into standards of practice for the sector. The CCCF's current Quality Assurance Project is assessing child care competencies, standards of practice, ethics and best practices, which could be the bases of an occupational profile.

The following analyses characterize accreditation and certification processes used by a range of occupations. The analyses identify essential features, their criteria of review, how they are applied within the occupations and the lessons they offer the ECCE sector.

Accreditation Models

In Canada, there is no national department of education or national body responsible for the regulation of occupations' education. The provinces and territories have these responsibilities and occupations' validation frameworks may vary across the country.

Some countries, particularly the United States, have extensive national accreditation systems. Their legislation may require accreditation of:

- colleges and universities as institutions of higher learning (institutional accreditation);
- programs of post-secondary education to prepare practitioners of occupations (specialized accreditation); and
- post-secondary institutions as eligible to receive federal funding.

In Canada, the principal form of accreditation is programs of post-secondary education to prepare practitioners of occupations and professions (specialized accreditation). In the absence of a national education/regulation agency, Canadian occupations and professions have developed national specialized accreditation systems for the education of their practitioners. (In 1994, the Association of Accrediting Agencies of Canada was formed. It is made up of about 20 agencies that accredit programs of study or certify occupational practitioners.)

Institutional accreditation of private post-secondary institutions does occur in Canada. (See Figure 2.) A number of the programs of study of these institutions are of disciplines studied in community colleges, including child care. A form of institutional accreditation is also implicit in the Canada Student Loans program regulations. It approves institutions, in Canada and abroad, as acceptable places of study for loan applicants. The program recognizes

FIGURE 2

ACCREDITATION OF PRIVATE POST-SECONDARY INSTITUTIONS

Private post-secondary educational institutions are accredited in Canada. In all cases, accreditation is of the institution and not of their programs per se.

The Canadian Education and Training Commission (CETC) is a national body associated with the National Association of Career Colleges (NACC). NACC is an association of private career training institutions (active members) across Canada and of companies offering products and services to those institutions (associate members). NACC's purpose is to encourage excellence in the private training sector and to promote the interests of its members at the national level.

Accreditation is a voluntary system of non-governmental self-regulation of Canadian private post-secondary institutions. Through the process of accreditation, institutions and the programs they offer students are evaluated and recognized for quality assurance. This recognition is extended through the CETC. Its primary objectives are to assure students and the general public of the quality of the institution and the programs it offers and to assist the institution in improving itself and the education provided to students.

The summarized criteria of CETC accreditation are:
- student recruitment—ethical and legal;
- advertising and promotion—truthful and forthright;
- tuition and refund policies—reveal all costs and have fair refund policies;
- admissions policies and practices—proper education to complete the program;
- enrollment agreement—institution's and students' rights, responsibilities and obligations;
- instructional materials—sufficient facilities/resources to support students' training;
- employment qualifications—training must prepare students for employment in their field of study;
- faculty—credentials and demonstrated work experience in their teaching field, institutions should have faculty development programs;
- financial stability and responsibility—must be financially sound;
- placement—maintain employment records for all graduates in the field of training;
- dispute resolution— published procedures for handling/resolving student complaints;
- student progress—good student attendance and reasonable completion rates;
- loan management—written plan of advising students on student loan responsibilities and rights.

CETC accreditation is subject to review, but is generally maintained through active membership in the NACC.

The Private Post-Secondary Education Commission of British Columbia is a legislated corporation (1996) responsible for consumer protection in respect of registered institutions and ensuring that standards of integrity and educational competence are met by accredited institutions providing private post-secondary education in British Columbia. Its accreditation criteria are comparable to the above. However, as a regulatory body, the Commission is charged with the examination of the institutions. Accreditation is renewed annually. Many British Columbia institutions are accredited by both the Commission and the CETC.

- Since 1992, Alberta has had a Private Colleges Accreditation Board, which opened degree-granting status to private colleges. Accreditation is primarily to facilitate affiliation arrangements between the colleges and Alberta universities legitimate post-secondary institutions with legitimate programs of study. Approval is not of the programs of study.

Canadian occupational/professional accreditation agencies take a number of forms. In some cases, national occupational associations accredit programs of study. Frequently, but not always, the associations are federations of the occupation's provincial associations. In other cases, the accreditation agency is at arm's length from the national association. In a few cases, the members of the accreditation agencies are the programs of study themselves.

Regardless of their form, the accreditation agencies' principal functions of are to state the standards of education for the occupation and review and evaluate programs of study against those standards. The reasons for and objectives of accreditation include:[12]
- general quality assurance by an external agency and resultant public protection;
- recognition that an institution (or program) has met established criteria;
- provision to graduates of a measure of career mobility and transferability of academic credentials;
- assistance to prospective students in identifying acceptable institutions and programs;
- assistance in identification of institutions warranting investment of public and private funds;
- assistance to institutions (programs) in their development and general increase of standards; and
- a basis for professional certification and licensing.

The majority of Canadian accreditation agencies accredit programs of study to educate the traditional professions and their related technologies. Figure 3 lists examples of the disciplines of study that are subject to accreditation in Canada. Within these, accreditation may be limited to program specializations. For example, engineering programs are accredited as aerospace, agricultural, chemical, civil, electrical, industrial, mechanical, petroleum engineering, etc.

Accreditation is voluntary. Institutions are not required by legislation to have their programs accredited by any professional/occupational organization. Alternatively, post-secondary institutions that submit their programs for accreditation must be chartered by their provincial governments and, in most cases, publicly funded.

While specialized accreditation is voluntary in fact, it is mandatory in effect if the programs' graduates are to obtain certification as practitioners through the most direct means of certification. Many professions/occupations relate certification to accreditation and require that practitioners graduate from accredited programs as a condition of certification. While practitioners may become certified without graduating from an accredited program, they are required to meet additional criteria. These may include review of program equivalence with

FIGURE 3

EXAMPLES OF POST-SECONDARY PROGRAMS OF STUDY SUBJECT TO ACCREDITATION

PROFESSIONS

- Architecture
- Dentistry
- Engineering
- Forestry
- Law
- Medicine
- Nursing
- Occupational Therapy
- Pharmacy
- Physiotherapy
- Speech and Language Pathology and Audiology
- Veterinary Medicine

TECHNOLOGIES

- Animal Health
- Applied Science
- Biochemical
- Cardiovascular Perfusion
- Chemical
- Chemical Engineering
- Computer Systems
- Cytotechnology
- Dental Assisting
- Dental Hygiene
- Emergency Medical
- Engineering
- Medical Laboratory
- Nuclear Medicine
- Radiation
- Radiography
- Respiratory
- Ultrasound

accredited programs, an extended period of experience in the occupation and/or competency examinations.

The requirement for graduation from an accredited program is of additional importance when the occupation is subject to licensure based in part upon certification as a practitioner. Graduation from an accredited program may be seen as the base of the credentialling ladder of the occupation.

Under these circumstances, it is in the interests of programs to be accredited if they are training their students to enter occupations that have certification and/or licensure processes.

Common Elements of Accreditation

Occupations have adopted very comparable systems to accredit education and training programs. While agencies of accreditation have a number of forms in Canada, they follow very similar steps in performing their functions. Described below is a study of common process elements and the relatively unique aspects of particular accreditation agencies.

These ten Canadian accreditation agencies were studied. Their accreditation activities cover almost 30 occupational programs of study:

- Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists;
- Canadian Association of University Schools of Nursing;
- Canadian Council for Accreditation of Pharmacy Programs;

- Canadian Engineering Accreditation Board;
- Canadian Information Processing Society;
- Conjoint Accreditation Services, Canadian Medical Association;
- Canadian Society for Chemical Technology;
- Canadian Technology Accreditation Board;
- Canadian Veterinary Medical Association;
- Commission on Dental Accreditation of Canada.

Processes

Figure 4 summarizes the common functions and processes of these agencies in the administration of their accreditation programs. The first step in the accreditation process is to establish a national board of directors (or council, etc.) which is representative of the

FIGURE 4

COMMON FUNCTIONS AND PROCESSES OF ACCREDITATION AGENCIES

- Form an agency board of directors to guide policy and procedures and ratify recommendations respecting program accreditation;
- Research and state standards of education and criteria of review to programs and occupational organizations;
- Establish methodologies, time tables and documentation of program assessments;
- Promote accreditation status among Canadian programs/institutions and occupational organizations;
- Develop an inventory of expertise within the occupation to act as program assessors;
- Receive applications from programs/institutions for accreditation;
- Advise candidate programs on the process of self-study preparatory to review;
- Provide candidate programs with self-study materials, to organize the format and depth of the report of the self-study;
- Form teams of experts, with a chair, to assess candidate programs through the review of the self-study reports and site visits to confirm the reported information;
- Coordinate team reviews of the self-study reports;
- Arrange and coordinate team site;
- Participate in the site visits;
- Collect and organize teams' assessments of programs;
- Verify the reports and recommendations with the teams;
- Provide the programs with draft reports/recommendations for comment and explanation;
- Revise the draft report/recommendations with and/or for the team and verify changes;
- Submit the reports/recommendations to the agency board for approval;
- Inform the program/institution of the accreditation status granted by the agency;
- Assess and collect accreditation fees from programs;
- Maintain a schedule of the review of accredited programs;
- Review and evaluate accreditation processes.

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occupation in terms of practice and regional location. With minor exceptions, the directors hold the most senior of credentials in the occupation of practice.

The most important function, upon which all other processes rest, is the statement of the standards of education to be provided by accredited programs and the consequent

criteria or evidence by which their candidacies are assessed. Following from the standards and criteria are the methodologies employed in the assessment process. All agencies require candidate programs to conduct self-studies of their adherence to the stated standards and criteria and to report to the agencies. Assessor teams review the self-study documentation and the program sites.

Agencies promote accreditation of programs among institutions and their associations and within the occupation and its organizations and associations. The value of accredited programs is also promoted among government regulatory agencies and related occupations.

Since the assessment activities of the agencies depend upon the availability of assessors, they maintain a register of people within the occupation who have the credentials and willingness to participate as assessors. Assessors volunteer their time and are only reimbursed for travel and living expenses incurred during program assessments. (Some certifying bodies consider accreditation assessment as a development activity for maintaining certification.) Assessors are selected to represent a national perspective and the province/territory of the program's institution. (An exception to the practice of provincial representation on teams is the Canadian Association of University Schools of Nursing, which intentionally avoids representation from the same province so that assessors will not be from schools of nursing that may "compete" with the candidate program.)

The agencies' efforts are largely directed at the organization and management of program assessment (and reassessment) activities. The agencies consult with candidate programs on their self-study and with assessment teams on the conduct of reviews. They make arrangements for the receipt and exchange of various documents and for meetings and site visits to review and verify these documents. Finally, they process assessment reports and recommendations to facilitate accreditation decisions about the programs.

Programs are either accredited or not. If accredited, they may be subject to required improvements or enhancements. In such cases, the period of accreditation is shorter to assure an early review of the completed enhancements. In some cases, accreditation status may be stated as temporary or conditional.

Accreditation is an ongoing process. It is granted for varying numbers of years. Consequently, the renewal of programs' accreditation is constantly being planned. While usually less onerous, the process of accreditation renewal follows the same steps as initial accreditation.

Criteria

While the programs of interest are quite different, accreditation agencies assess common sets of criteria. Figure 5 overviews the requirements commonly studied in the assessment process, both through self-study by candidate programs and assessor teams. With each are examples of the kinds of considerations in their assessment.

While all of the dimensions are important, Thomas[13] has noted that those emphasized by accreditation agencies may be summarized as:

> Relevance—the extent to which the mission and goals of a program reflect a response to the major trends within society, the discipline of study and the present and future service needs of the larger community.
>
> Accountability—the extent to which the program teaches the student that the primary responsibility of the occupation is to the client.

FIGURE 5

PROGRAM ASSESSMENT REQUIREMENTS

Organization and Administration
- line of authority in institution
- program and financial autonomy
- advisory committee role/membership
- qualification/status of program head
- head's role in institution governance
- program governance structures/processes

Instructional Objectives and Purposes
- admission requirements
- instructor/student ratios
- knowledge/skill outcomes of program components
- student performance requirements
- competence of graduates

Faculty and Development
- instructional/administrative responsibilities
- credentials/experience
- conditions of employment
- assessment and promotion practices
- research/scholarship
- continuing study opportunities

Curriculum
- courses of study
- concentration in discipline
- general/option studies
- applied experience (practice)
- methods/modes of instruction
- student evaluation methods

Financial Resources
- available to the program
- proportionate to other programs
- proportionate to number of students
- program fee structure

Physical Resources
- instructional space/locations
- technical space/locations
- off-campus sites

Learning Resources
- library holdings
- multimedia holdings

Student Services
- transportation/parking
- health/advisory services
- recreation facilities
- student participation in governance

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> Relatedness—the extent to which the components of a program support and build upon other parts, thereby promoting or negating the achievement of goals. The components are: 1) curriculum; 2) the teaching of the discipline; 3) research, scholarship and professional activities; and 4) administration. Mutual support among components is a dimension of quality and a measure of internal consistency.
>
> Uniqueness—the extent to which a program capitalizes on unique characteristics of its resources (faculty, community values, financial support, etc.) within its particular setting.

Self-study reports extensively document the programs' dimensions. Most often, the accreditation agency provides explicit questions to candidate programs. This standardization ensures that all of the required information is provided and in a form that is fairly standard across programs.

Some of the required information is in existing documents, such as institution calendars, institution and program policy statements, directives to students and faculty, minutes of meetings, etc. Other information is documented through the survey of records and files, library holdings, facilities, practices, faculty credentials and course materials and interviews with students, faculty, administration, alumni and graduates.

Self-study is a major undertaking of the candidate program, requiring careful coordination, extensive time and effort to collect information and a ear description of the program. All accreditation agencies identify the self-study as being a developmental activity of the program.

The assessment team compares the information provided in the self-study report against the stated requirements of accreditation agencies. The team's purpose is to assess whether the information provides evidence that the candidate programs meet those requirements. Assessment teams' site visits are to verify that the information provided in self-study reports is urate and to obtain clarification or additional information, as required.

Costs

There are costs associated with the accreditation of programs. As described above, programs and their institutions have to be prepared to devote extensive time to the conduct and reporting of the self-study. Most self-studies are measured in months of person-time. Time is required to prepare for and host the accreditation team site visit and to respond to written enquiries and the draft report. Additionally, the programs and institutions may have to make substantial investments of money and time to act on the recommendations of the assessment team.

The accreditation agency must cover its own cost of administration and accreditation. The time volunteered by assessors constitutes a significant financial saving to the agency and candidate programs. It is estimated that volunteer assessors contribute 50 to 75 per cent of the true costs of accreditation. Agencies derive funding from fees paid by sponsoring occupational organizations and/or from fees assessed for candidate and accredited programs.

Candidate programs usually pay accreditation agencies between $2,500 and $5,000, plus assessment team travel expenses, for their initial accreditation. These are usually one-time expenses and some agencies allow programs to pay their fees over several years. Programs may anticipate incurring these expenses every three to seven years, depending upon the level and duration of their accreditation.

Unique Elements of Accreditation

Among accreditation agencies, the Canadian Association of University Schools of Nursing (CAUSN) is unique. Its members are the schools of nursing that it accredits. In contrast, the members of most accreditation agencies are practitioners of the occupation. In effect, the accredited programs of the CAUSN are mutually regulating.

Because of its membership structure, the CAUSN charges annual fees ranging from $3,500 to $5,000, which serve as both accreditation and membership fees. Unlike most accreditation agencies, which primarily use experienced practitioners in their assessment teams, CAUSN teams are made up of experienced nurse educators from its member programs.

Location is a consideration in selecting CAUSN team members. University nursing programs within a province/territory or region may be seen as competing for students, so CAUSN teams are comprised of educators from other provinces, territories or regions.

The Canadian Engineering Accreditation Board (CEAB) involves provincial engineering associations in two ways. First, programs applying for accreditation must have the concurrence of their provincial professional associations. Professional associations are familiar with the history and development of local programs and their members are most likely to have the first professional contacts with their graduates. Second, provincial associations nominate assessors to the CEAB, based upon their knowledge of local professional engineers and their expertise. Assessors are involved in assessments in both their own and other provinces/territories.

The Conjoint Accreditation Secretariat (CAS) of the Canadian Medical Association accredits the training programs of 10 health science technologies and their clinical practica settings. It charges programs an initial accreditation fee ($350 in 1997) and an annual fee for each program ($785) and clinical setting ($820). Unlike most accreditation agencies, it does not charge the program for travel expenses associated with site visits. These are covered in the annual operating budget of the CAS. Its policy equalizes the costs of travel to programs so that distant programs are not penalized.

A number of accreditation agencies (including the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists, Canadian Technology Accreditation Board, Canadian Engineering Accreditation Board, Conjoint Accreditation Services of the Canadian Medical Association) are adopting competency-based criteria. To varying degrees, they are assessing the knowledge, skills, capacities, attributes and performance of students and graduates. The CAS has developed a new accreditation system, which profiles and emphasizes competency and outcomes. Because the system can be applied to structure the competencies of any occupation, the CAS is about to sell licences for its use. Figure 6 summarizes the principles and requirements for accreditation using the new system.[14]

There are a number of innovations within the new CAS accreditation framework. Under relevance, there must be a competency profile for the occupation and evidence that the program trains students to its competencies. Under resources, the CAS is moving away from measurement of prescribed resources, such as expenditure per student or volumes in the library, toward informed judgements about whether the program provides adequate training.

Integration refers to a change from the separate accreditation of programs and their clinical practica settings, toward accreditation of both together. The focus will be on how the

FIGURE 6

PRINCIPLES AND REQUIREMENTS FOR ACCREDITATION

Areas	Principles	Requirements for Accreditation
Relevance	The outcomes of the educational process are relevant to the provision of quality patient care	The program enables students to attain the competencies specified in the national entry-level competency profile for the profession.
Students	The student is the focus of the educational process.	The program supports the students' educational interests and protects their rights.
Resources	Adequate resources are required to support the educational process.	The program's resources are adequate to support student learning to the level required to meet the objectives.
Integration	Effective integration of learning components results in a cohesive educational process.	The program provides an integrated learning experience for students.
Program Evaluation	Effective program evaluation leads to quality improvement in the educational process.	The program evaluation process results in continuous quality improvement.

academic and clinical settings fully integrate and supervise the students' education. Finally, accredited programs will be expected to continuously evaluate themselves and to use the evidence of monitoring as the bases of change.

While the objectives, curricula, facilities and financing of programs remain considerations in accreditation, the outcome competencies of students is being increasingly emphasized by these agencies. In this respect, the criteria of training program accreditation and practitioner certification are becoming comparable, if not synonymous. Partially in recognition of this relationship, the CAUSN and the Commission on Dental Accreditation of Canada (CDAC) consult with provincial licensing authorities as part of their assessments of programs.

A measure of competency is gauged by other agencies during their site visits. The Canadian Technology Accreditation Board (CTAB) and the CDAC seek evidence of the success of program graduates in becoming certified. The CDAC also observes dental hygiene student clinical practice during its site visits.

In accrediting programs, some accreditation agencies simultaneously accredit cooperating institutions. As noted above in the discussion of Figure 6, most often the programs involve practica placements in community hospitals and clinics. For example, the Red River Community College's medical laboratory technology program places its students in the laboratories of Winnipeg's Health Science Centre, Misericordia General Hospital, St. Boniface General Hospital, Canadian Red Cross and Brandon's Westman Regional Laboratory.

In accrediting the academic program of the College, the CAS separately accredits the cooperating laboratories, recognizing that they are critical components of the students' core learning experience. The CAS is changing this practice to accredit a program and its collaborating laboratories as a single consortium.

The CAUSN has a comparable initiative. It has established an "associate" membership. It recognizes that universities and colleges are establishing education ladders of study. For example, the University of Victoria and British Columbia community colleges have established the Collaborative Nursing Program. The Program allows college nursing students to complete a standardized course of studies for a Diploma in Nursing and/or to carry the Diploma to the University of Victoria for advance credit. Within the Collaborative Nursing Program, the university school of nursing is accredited. The participating colleges are CAUSN associate members, whose courses of study are comparable and contributory to the university program.

The Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists (CAOT) has developed training programs for its assessors.[15] Such training, over and above assessor guides and handbooks, is designed to assure common understanding of accreditation criteria and their assessment, prepare assessors for the review and visit experiences and build a sense of *esprit de corps* among assessors.

Finally, the CAS does accredit some medical technology programs that deliver its academic curriculum through distance education methodologies. In these cases, clinical practica are still required to be institution-based. The CAS may, but does not yet, accredit private training programs.

Considerations

The descriptions of common and unique elements in accreditation practices demonstrate that there is a wealth of experience, a variety of models and emerging innovations that the ECCE community might draw upon to design an accreditation model of its own. Many resources are available from accreditation agencies to help guide the development of models. A benefit of the relatively new Association of Accrediting Agencies of Canada is access to an evolving database of information on accreditation and evaluation. There is no shortage of information on starting an accreditation endeavour.

However, there are serious considerations regarding if and how to proceed,[16] such as the environment into which accreditation may be introduced, how accreditation is conceptualized and the processes of accreditation. The following describes these considerations prior to an assessment of their relevance to the ECCE community.

Occupational Affiliation

The accreditation of training programs must be based upon an occupation, its body of knowledge, defining practices and the people involved. While not necessary to an occupation, once an accreditation regime is established it must be inherent to the occupation. In short, accreditation represents an occupation's consensus about the definition of itself and its membership. The necessary consensus must be found within an occupation's organizations.

An occupation's organizations are the sources of its definition, differentiation from other occupations and ultimately, its standards. Occupations not having a high degree of affiliation are not likely to have the required level of consensus among its practitioners to achieve these ends. Where consensus is weak, it is likely that some other body will define the occupation.

Self-definition, autonomy and self-regulation increase within an occupation as affiliation within it grows and its organizations strengthen. With increasing affiliation, an occupation is likely to be more:
- persuasive in attracting practitioners to affiliate;
- insistent about the characteristics of its members and the work they do; and

- credible with other bodies (occupations, governments, clients and public) for gaining recognition of and respect for occupation.

Occupational affiliation and the certification of practitioners are important precursors to occupational validation processes, including the accreditation of training programs. It facilitates the development of standards and their acceptance. Broad acceptance of standards within an occupation sets the stage for accreditation and certification processes and public and political acceptance of them.

The occupation has to be sufficiently organized to make its case for recognition and acceptance. It is noteworthy that the Committee on Conjoint Accreditation of the CMA requires that a health science seeking accreditation must demonstrate its need at a national level. It must prove that accreditation of its education programs will improve the ability of practitioners and, therefore, the quality of patient care. There must be a certification process, a national-level competency profile and formal educational programs at national levels.[17]

These are stringent criteria and it is clear that an emergent profession must be well positioned to meet them. Although they are criteria for health sciences, they also inform other occupations. First, they call into question the accreditation of training programs as the base of vertical integration. Indeed, they suggest that accreditation should be the last element built into an occupation's validation framework. Second, they illustrate the kinds of evidence, instruments and infrastructures that an occupation must have in place to make its case for accreditation. Most of all, they imply that a very high degree of occupational affiliation is necessary in order to make the case for accreditation.

Purposes

The accreditation of training programs serves a number of ends. It is a means to:
- quality, professional education;
- quality practitioners;
- portability and articulation of educational credits; and
- career mobility for graduates.

There may be tension between these ends. For example, if educational and career mobility are emphasized over quality education and people, there may be a tendency towards the lowest common denominator among training programs. Mobility is primarily in the interests of an efficient and equitable labour market. As the labour market is more inclusive (e.g., national), the more it looks for common standards, which may become expressed as minimum acceptable standards.

The expectation of minimum acceptable standards may act against program and accreditation quality aspirations. This possible effect is noted to illustrate that the purposes of training program accreditation must be clear from the outset. While mobility may be a desirable and actual outcome of accreditation, it is typically not its purpose. Nor is it likely to be a rationale acceptable to practitioners or the public. There are other ways to achieve mobility. Accreditation is legitimized by its expectations of quality.

Jurisdiction

Accreditation agencies recommend more that just program improvements. They also make recommendations with respect to administrative practices, program financing, organizational structure and student services. Williamson[18] observes that these force requirements on institutions and erode their policy prerogatives. Accredited programs may be advantaged over non-accredited programs in resource decisions. Their faculty, financing and facilities must be maintained for them to maintain their accreditation status, which may be at the relative expense of non-accredited programs in an institution.

Costs

Accreditation is a cost to institutions. As noted earlier, while accreditation is voluntary, it is effectively mandatory if graduation from an accredited program is a requirement of certification or licensing. Costs, measured in money and time, inevitably rise as the number of an institution's programs are accredited. The per capita costs may not be high, but they are costs nonetheless. Institutions may be reluctant to accept additional accreditation costs, particularly in the absence of compelling reasons to do so.

There are also costs for practitioners who volunteer to be involved on teams that survey programs for accreditation. They have to be able or willing to forego income or obtain release time so they can participate on survey teams on a voluntary basis.

Defining Programs

Programs are becoming diffuse as to discipline and location.[19] They are increasingly inter- or multidisciplinary in orientation, making it difficult to identify precisely the occupation(s) for which they prepare their students. In part, this orientation reflects the recognition that some occupations/professions are not "discipline pure" and mastery of more than one is required to be effective in contemporary society. In part, this orientation represents attempts to provide educations that prepare graduates for entry into a variety of occupations, such as college programs in law and society, whose graduates may be destined for occupations as police officers, corrections officers, legal assistants, etc. While accreditation is of specialized disciplines within the multidisciplinary program, assessments must consider how the other disciplines add or detract from the specialization.

Programs are becoming distributed across locations. The Collaborative Nursing Program described above is one example of a program located in many institutions. British Columbia's

Open University (OU) and Open College (OC) systems effectively allow students to build certificates, diplomas and degrees with courses from colleges and universities across the province. Study is through a full range of distance, multimedia, independent study and some classroom courses. Credits may be applied to credentials from the OU or OC or to those from participating colleges, universities and professional associations. Within systems like this, programs are less able to control their courses of study, the quality of courses and experiences and their coherence for accreditation purposes.

Distance education programs, whether correspondence, multimedia or Internet delivered, bridge institutions and borders. Resulting "virtual" programs challenge traditional accreditation processes. There are no programs per se to self-evaluate. Cyberspace does not lend itself to program site visits.

Definition of Institution

Most, but not all, agencies accredit only programs in publicly-funded institutions. Private post-secondary institutions are growing in number and broadness of their programs. Largely because of increasing government investments in training and student loans, private institutions are becoming more viable. Particularly at the college level, they are becoming increasingly competitive for students. While there are concerns about the quality and accountability of their programs, most are taking steps to assure a measure of quality through institutional accreditation and some have obtained specialized accreditation status.

Some private institutions participate with public institutions in collaborative programming and transfer agreements, thus blurring the distinction between private and public institutions and implicitly equating the quality of courses offered. Private education is a growing source of distance education programming, some of which is provided over the Internet. As they attract more students, they will be able to afford to offer more and better programs.

Lifelong Learning

People can no longer be assumed to be on education or career ladders. Development is now seen as a lattice of education and career that allows many paths throughout one's lifetime. Education and experience may cumulate in both academic and a variety of workplace settings and in no particular order. Individuals are entering and graduating from programs of study with quite different sets of credentials. Programs are having to recognize that individuals' unique combinations of education and experience are worthy of advance credit. Prior learning assessment methodologies have become relatively standard in post-secondary institutions.

Programs can no longer assure and accreditation agencies can no longer assume that students are equally exposed to the same course of study or that their courses of study are of equal quality.

Trade

Agreements like NAFTA, the provincial Agreement On Internal Trade and the Pan Canadian Protocol on the Transfer of University Credits theoretically allow for the free movement of occupational credentials across national and provincial borders. The requirement is that credentials obtained in one locale must be accepted in another. Implicit is the assumption that the credentials are based upon comparable education and experience. The consequence is that jurisdictions are having to assure one another that these assumptions are valid. An index of comparability is the occupational accreditation standards and processes of the respective jurisdictions. International and national accreditation regimes are possible outcomes, which means that those of a jurisdiction may be greatly influenced or even replaced by those of other jurisdictions.

Methodology

Accreditation criteria typically focus on measures of dimensions of the course of study, the faculty who provide it and the facilities within which it is provided. Studies for the ACCC have reported that these criteria cannot be shown to be valid predictors of program quality nor, more pointedly, of the competencies of graduates.[20] For example, the degrees held by faculty, average expenditures per student and the number of volumes in libraries are not indicative of better programs or graduates.

It has been argued that accreditation should be based on objectively determined competencies of students and graduates.[21] The reasoning is that quality programs produce graduates who can demonstrate competence, as established by practitioners, accrediting agencies and educators. As described earlier, many accreditation agencies have recognized this rationale and are giving more emphasis to the assessment of student and graduate competence in their accreditation criteria. They observe practising students, use reports of certification success and have developed profiles of competencies and techniques to assess them. These may indicate a paradigm shift away from traditional accreditation, based upon process variables, towards outcome or competency models.

Alternatively, there is concern about an overemphasis on competency-based accreditation. The worry is that if the performance of students/graduates is the principal criterion in accreditation, programs will begin to "teach to the tests" and otherwise reduce their educational comprehensiveness.

Summary

A number of trends may be identified in these considerations and the evolving practices of accreditation agencies:[22]

1. Accreditation activity will likely increase as occupations and professions seek to establish and strengthen their identities and as governments continue to deregulate.

2. Program accreditation will gain increased emphasis within institutions, including private institutions.

3. Accreditation agencies will increasingly validate and revise their methodology, particularly towards bases in student and graduate competence.

4. Accreditation agencies will increasingly coordinate their efforts to address the growth of multidisciplinary programs and to reduce the accreditation burden on institutions.

5. Accreditation agencies will increasingly emphasize support to institutions in program development and reduce the emphasis on their evaluation and assessment roles.

6. Nationally, governments, institutions, occupation organizations and accreditation agencies will increasingly collaborate in setting labour market standards and in specifying their educational bases.

Implications for ECCE

Our Child Care Workforce: From Recognition to Remuneration provides a profile of ECCE education in Canada in 1995-96.[23] Almost 120 post-secondary institutions in Canada offered certificate, diploma and degree ECCE programs. Of these, 16 were university degree programs. Eleven were private institutions. About 90 community colleges offered ECCE programs. The membership of the Association of Canadian Community Colleges in 1995-96 was about 170 colleges. Thus, just over half of ACCC member colleges are estimated to have had an ECCE program.

ECCE certificate programs (usually one year long) were offered by about 60 colleges, while 76 colleges offered diploma programs (usually two years long). In Quebec, the Diplome détudes collegiales is a three-year diploma program, following completion of Grade 11. About 40 per cent of the colleges offered both programs. An estimated 20,000 students were enrolled in ECCE college programs in 1995-96. The majority (75 per cent) were in diploma programs. About half of the students were at Ontario colleges. Six of every 10 students were enrolled in part-time or distance education programs. The college programs graduated an estimated 4,000 students in 1995-96.

Clearly, the education of ECCE practitioners is significant within the Canadian college system and labour market. But it has been characterized as being unsatisfactory in a number of ways:[24]

- inconsistent training and quality;
- reductions in faculty, increased class sizes and less faculty time for field supervision;
- limited geographic and financial accessibility to programs;

- limited curricula on administration and care in family homes and of school-age, infant and special needs children;
- limited articulation and credit transfer among programs;
- restricted career mobility and options for graduates;
- no coordinated means to share innovation in training models, development and delivery.

While Canadian ECCE programs represent a critical occupational mass, they lack regional and national coherence. An ECCE program in one location may bear little resemblance in form and outcomes to programs elsewhere within the region or country.

In part, this situation reflects the authority of the agency that approves the delivery of programs in the provinces and territories.[25] In eight jurisdictions, ministries responsible for higher education, training and/or labour establish program guidelines and approve ECCE programs to be offered by institutions. While it may be assumed that their guidelines consider the ECCE licensing requirements of the jurisdiction, there is no assurance that they are predicated upon a sound educational profile of the occupation.

The ministries responsible for child care services approve ECCE programs in four provinces and territories (Northwest Territories, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia and Saskatchewan). In these jurisdictions, there is assurance that their guidelines are based upon the educational requirements of child care staff within their licensing provisions. However, there is no assurance that they are based upon educational profiles of the occupation.

Regardless of the authority of approval, educational program guidelines may be assumed to reflect the local child care licensing system. Four provinces and territories require that at least some staff in child care centres have diplomas. Six require a certificate and experience, while two have no educational requirements.[26] In half of Canada's provinces and territories, the highest level of training offered by *most* of their college training programs is equivalent to the licensing requirements (whether a certificate or a diploma). Programs do exceed licensing requirements. Thus it is noteworthy that in the other provinces/territories, most college programs offer higher levels of training than required.[27]

In general, then, licensing requirements are not a stimulus for longer programs of ECCE study and, given the range of these requirements, there is little likelihood that jurisdictions will move to commonly high licensing requirements in the foreseeable future.

In part, the situation reflects the decreasing financial capacity of institutions to strengthen their programs to commonly high standards or offer specialized training. Programs are experiencing or recovering from budget reductions. Constraints on public spending limit the prospects of new investments in programs. Students are resistant to higher tuition fees to cover ECCE program enhancements. They are unwilling to pay more or accrue debt for an education that will give them entry to low-paying jobs. They may only be willing to take a program that is sufficient to meet local requirements. They may be attracted by lower fees at private institutions. Together, these factors minimize program opportunities to improve.

In part, the situation probably reflects a lack of consensus among programs about what is required in high quality ECCE training. Reasonably, each is probably providing the training that it judges to best meet the market it serves. The last characteristic of ECCE training listed above is telling. In the absence of mechanisms to exchange information about their respective training models, development and delivery, programs cannot have common understandings of what is possible, what are the best practices and what are the achievable standards in ECCE training. Consensus cannot be expected or confirmed among programs without opportunities for exchanges on these matters. A few jurisdictions, such as Manitoba, do require regular meetings among their ECCE training programs.

Let us assume that ECCE training programs commonly aspire to the highest possible standards and that they view some form of accreditation as a way to assure those standards. Moving to an accreditation regime from the current situation will require consensus. That consensus may be forged by external pressures, such as occupational organizations, government agencies, students and the public. It might occur internally, through agreement among programs. Or, it might result from a combination of both. The reality appears to be that external pressures are not likely to be sufficiently strong in the foreseeable future to forge a consensus.

ECCE training programs thus have a choice. They can wait and prepare for external pressures becoming strong enough to drive them to accreditation. Or, they can take matters into their own hands and take the steps necessary to formulate an accreditation regime. The next section describes and recommends steps that the ECCE occupation and its training programs might take to this end.

Certification Models

All occupations that have training program accreditation require post-secondary education, whether at the college or university level, including post-graduate education. Occupations that have practitioner certification may require post-secondary education, may have their own non-institutional courses of study and/or may be based in supervised experience. Consequently, many more occupations have certification processes than have accreditation processes. Certification is used by a full range of occupations, including blue/pink collar trades, white collar occupations and the professions.

Occupational certification falls within the purview of provinces and territories. Requirements are usually, but not always, pursuant to provincial/territorial legislation. The legislation may provide for direct government regulation of the occupation. Or, it may mandate agencies to regulate occupations at arm's length. Or, the legislation may recognize organizations as self-regulating the occupation.

Legislative bases for certification have a number of purposes that may simultaneously apply to some occupations. They are to assure the public that:
- services will protect their health and safety;
- services are financially secure;
- practitioners have at least minimum levels of competence;
- practitioners perform their services ethically; and
- practitioners are in fact members of the occupation.

Occupational standards applied in practitioner certification may be national, provincial/territorial or local in scope. In reality, most standards are effectively national. Most provincial/territorial organizations are nationally federated. While each may set slightly different certification criteria, they are sufficiently identical that they are acceptable to all members of the national organization. Where practitioners must pass examinations for certification, these are usually set and administered by the national organization. Some occupations in some jurisdictions have begun to question national standards as being based too low and are considering higher standards for their jurisdiction. This movement appears to be related to the formation of occupational colleges, particularly in Ontario, and the professionalization of occupations in Quebec.

Even where certification (usually as a licence) is regulated by government, there is constant interprovincial/territorial consultation among government agencies to identify and apply common standards. The most comprehensive example of interprovincial/territorial standards are the "red seal trades." These designated trades are based upon common standards developed through the Interprovincial Standards Program of the Canadian Council of Directors of Apprenticeship. The red seal on certificates allows designated tradespeople to work anywhere in Canada.

Certification is voluntary. People fully qualified to perform an occupation may not seek certification. However, where the occupation's practice is covered in legislation, such individuals may not hold themselves out to the public for purposes of employment or the provision of services as a practitioner. If they work within the occupation, it must be under the direction or title of a certified practitioner, who accepts responsibility for the services performed by the non-certified individual.

A vast number of occupations are subject to or have adopted certification requirements, usually as provincial/territorial licensing. Figure 7 illustrates the diversity of occupations that are certified. The list is far from exhaustive. Not all occupations listed are certified in all jurisdictions, but all are subject to certification in one or more Canadian jurisdictions.

FIGURE 7

OCCUPATIONS THAT REQUIRE CERTIFICATION/LICENSING

air traffic controllers
aircraft inspectors
ambulance attendants
animal health technologists
architects
architectural technologists
audiologists
automobile mechanics
barbers
boilermakers
cardiologist technologists
carpenters
chiropractors
chefs
clinical perfusionists
deck officers
dental hygienists
dieticians
drafting technologists
driver educators
electricians
embalmers
engineers
forestry professionals
gas fitters
geologists
general accountants
graphic designers
heavy equipment operators
hot-air balloon pilots
human resource professionals
insurance adjusters
investment underwriters
land surveyors
lawyers
locksmiths
machinists
mall managers
marriage counselors
massage therapists
midwives
nurses
occupational therapists
optometrists
patent agents
pharmacists
physicians
physiotherapists
pipe fitters
plumbers
psychologists
quarry blasters
radiation therapists
real estate brokers
respiratory therapists
social workers
speech-language pathologists
steam fitters
teachers
tool and die makers
travel counselors
underground miners
veterinarians
welders
X-ray technicians

From the preceding, it may be correctly inferred that practitioner certification is highly variable across occupations and jurisdictions. There are common elements in the various approaches to certification among occupations. However, there are many more differences in the criteria applied and processes followed than there are common elements.

Commonalities in Certification

In spite of the diversity of authorities in, occupations covered by and criteria used for practitioner certification, a limited number of models cover most differences. Four examples of certification approaches described by Williamson[28] provide the starting point for the identification of seven generic models of certification.

Figure 8 summarizes the seven models in terms of the applicability of minimum conditions in the certification of occupations. Also presented is an example of an occupation certified under each model.

The generic models are not exhaustive of all certification models. The minimum conditions used in the analysis are relatively general. Many more models could result if the analysis were to be based upon particular, more discrete categories (e.g., whether or not experience,

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FIGURE 8

COMMON CERTIFICATION MODELS

MINIMUM CONDITION	GENERIC MODELS OF CERTIFICATION						
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII
Legislated Definition	province/ territory	province/ territory	P/T and occupation society	P/T and occupation society	delegated to occupation society	delegated to occupation society	assumed by occupation society
Required Education	specified post-secondary or occupational	specified post-secondary or occupational	specified post-secondary	accredited program	accredited program	specified post-secondary	specified post-secondary or occupational
Membership in Association			required	required	required	required	required
Post Education Experience		usually required	may be required	required	usually required	may be required	may be required
Qualifying Examination(s)	usually required	usually required		required	usually required	may be required	may be required
Continuing Education		usually not required	may be required	required	may be required	may be required	may be required
Portable Credentials	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	usually	usually
Example Occupation	hairstylist	auto mechanic	teacher	physician	electronics technologist	pharmacy technician	financial planner

examinations or continuing education are required). The seven models are sufficient to illustrate major differences in occupations' approaches to practitioner certification.

Generic models I and II are most commonly used by government agencies in the certification or licensing of trades. The education required by the occupations may be acquired through post-secondary education at private or community colleges and/or through apprenticeship within the occupation. The principal distinction between the two models is that trades under model II are more likely to pose current and future public risk. Consequently, there is greater dependency on the demonstrated and current competence of practitioners.

Model III occupations are designated by government agencies, but practitioners are under the continuing authority of a designated occupational society or association. Very often, education is the sole certification entry requirement. However, the maintenance of certification frequently requires demonstrable relevant experience and/or continuing education.

The typical professional certification approach is presented in model IV. The occupation is defined in legislation, but authority for it is delegated to its societies or associations. Education, experience and continuing development are prescribed. It is likely to adhere to standards set by a national body of the profession.

Models V and VI are typically defined following legislation that delegates authority to an occupational society. That is, the legislation gives authority to the society to define and regulate the occupation. The principal distinction between the two models is the relative emphasis on education, experience and continuing development. Model V is more likely to be based upon national standards and thus its practitioners usually have more mobility.

Model VII represents the purest form of a self-mandated, self-regulating occupation and has no legislated definition. Education may be through private or public colleges, but is frequently through a course of study prescribed and delivered by the occupation. Occupations using this model give slightly different emphasis to experience, examinations and continuing development. But most have requirements of one or more of these. The portability of credentials is dependent upon how national the occupation is in the scope and membership of its governing association.

Of note is that continuing membership in the occupations' authorized associations is a firm requirement in models III through VII. An implication appears to be that governments are more likely to delegate regulatory authority over occupations where they have continuing high degrees of membership affiliation.

The steps in certification across occupations is fairly similar although, as will be seen in the case studies in the following section, the bases of certification differ across them. Generally the steps of certification are:

1. The practitioner submits a formal application for certification by (and usually membership in) the certifying association.

2. The application is accompanied by an application fee and supporting proof of required credentials (e.g., education, experience, citizenship status).

3. The certifying association verifies the applicant's credentials, including equivalence for credentials obtained outside Canada.

4. The certifying association may require demonstration of qualifying competence, as through examination or supervised experience by a certified practitioner.

5. Certification and membership are granted on the bases of acceptable credentials and qualifications and the full payment of membership fees.

Some occupations (e.g., school teachers) may initially grant interim certification, with permanent certification being granted upon the subsequent completion of one or two years of practice.

The costs of obtaining and maintaining certification vary. Under models I and II tradespeople pay an initial and annual licensing fees to the province or territory in which they practise. Continuing membership in the certifying association is normally required under models III through VII. Thus, there is a base and perpetual cost to practitioners to maintain their certification status. The range in membership fees across occupations is great. The following is a sampling of what various practitioners pay on average for annual full membership fees to their certifying associations:

• physicians	$1,600
• school teachers	$ 500
• general accountants	$ 600
• speech-language pathologists and audiologists	$ 400
• engineers	$ 170
• engineering/applied science technicians/technologists	$ 150
• pharmacy technicians	$ 100
• financial planners	$ 280
• nurses	$ 240
• nursing assistants	$ 110
• Realtors	$ 200
• dental assistants	$ 80

In addition to these fees, most practitioners pay one-time certification fees. The purposes of certification fees and their bases are provided as part of the case studies presented below.

Illustrative Case Studies of Certification

An analysis of the variety of certification processes and criteria across occupations would be extremely complex and confusing in its detail. A series of case studies was developed to illustrate the considerations and processes that certifying associations use in the certification of their practitioners. The case studies were chosen to be reasonably representative of the diversity of approaches to certification.

Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Representatives

Figure 9 summarizes the approach used in the certification of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Representatives (PMRs). Their certification is unique among occupations in that the certifying agency was established and is maintained by the pharmaceutical industry to assure standard levels of knowledge among the people who market their products. Certification is required within two years of employment with a member company of the Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association of Canada (PMAC).

The principal qualification for certification of PMRs is the completion of a course of study on health conditions and pharmacology. The course is usually completed in nine months and followed by a comprehensive examination. A certificate of successful completion of the examination is granted as certification.

FIGURE 9

CERTIFYING PHARMACEUTICAL MANUFACTURERS REPRESENTATIVES (PMRs)

PMRs market to and take orders for pharmaceutical products from physicians, clinics, hospitals and retail pharmacies. Their certification is not required in legislation. They are usually employees of companies belonging to the Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association of Canada (PMAC), which established the Council for the Accreditation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Representatives of Canada (APMR).

Education

- normally college or university graduates in a health discipline to establish reasonable likelihood of completing the required course of study;
- completion of the APMR introductory accreditation course, comprised of 13 self-study modules on anatomical systems and pharmacology—about nine months to complete;
- post graduate study program also possible.

Experience

- within two years of employment with a PMAC member company.

Examination

- accreditation examination on the 13 modules of study.

Eligibility

- anyone may take the accreditation course and examination, although most are employed by a PMAC member company and endorsed by company manager.

Renewal

- accreditation is continuous with employment with a PMAC member company or associated organization (e.g., quality assessment laboratory).

Portability

- portable among PMAC companies;
- new employers may require a challenge examination of PMRs who have long-standing accreditation.

Fees

- $500 for self-study course;
- 100 to write the examination;
- usually paid by employing company;
- no continuing fee.

Beyond the $600 for the course and examination (usually paid for by the applicant's company), the only continuing requirement to maintain certification is employment by a member company of PMAC.

Financial Planners

The registration of financial planners (FPs) is required in Alberta and Quebec only, pursuant to their legislation on securities trading and management. Registration is through the Canadian Association of Financial Planner (CAFP), which is a national organization with provincial chapters. Figure 10 summarizes the processes in FP certification.

FPs do not require formal post-secondary education credentials. However, they are required to complete a prescribed course of study, which is offered by the Canadian Institute of Financial Planning (CFIP). The course work covers personal financial planning, investment planning, taxation, investment instruments, retirement planning, risk management, estate planning and professional ethics. It may be taken by correspondence and/or at 20 community colleges. Upon completion of the required courses, they must pass an examination administered by the Financial Planner Standards Council of Canada. Through agreements with 14 other professional associations, their members may also take the examination.

Registration is granted upon the demonstration of the current and continuing practice of financial planning, professional liability insurance, the presentation of a sample financial plan, the sponsorship of three registered FPs and membership in the CAFP. Registration is maintained through continuing membership in the CAFP and annual continuing education.

The certification process for FPs is often referred to as an open system in that it has no formal education requirements and thus affords may paths to certification. In effect, the course work and examination requirements do assure a standard education (albeit diversely obtained)

FIGURE 10

CERTIFYING FINANCIAL PLANNERS (FPs)

Professional FPs determine the financial needs and objectives of clients and use this information to develop personalized programs of savings and investments to help clients realize their financial goals. They may be employed in financial services firms or operate their own businesses.

Education

- post-secondary education per se is not required;
- Canadian Institute of Financial Planning (CFIP) provides correspondence and classroom courses;
- CFIP courses may be taken at 20 public and private colleges in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario and Nova Scotia;
- education of 14 other occupations (e.g., chartered accountant, chartered life underwriter, business administration) accepted as equivalent through agreements with them.

Experience

- continuously in practice for two years;
- currently practising financial planning.

Examination

- required examination administered by the Financial Planner Standards Council of Canada (FPSCC);
- challenge examination may be taken by 14 other occupations who have three years experience in financial planning and membership in their occupational association.

Eligibility

- must carry professional liability insurance;
- must submit a sample financial plan upon application;
- must be sponsored for membership by three members in good standing of the Canadian Association of Financial Planners (CAFP).

Renewal

- 20 hours per year of acceptable continuing education;
- continuing membership in good standing of the CAFP.

Portability

- between provinces requiring Registered Financial Planner and among chapters of the CAFP.

Fees

- correspondence and/or classroom courses;
- $325 for initial registration;
- $275 annual membership in CAFP.

among all FPs. Except in Alberta and Quebec, financial planners are a self-mandated, self-regulating occupation.

Practical Nursing Assistants

Registration of practical nursing assistants (PNAs) is required in provinces pursuant to legislation authorizing nursing and/or practical nursing associations within their jurisdictions. Figure 11 summarizes their certification process. PNA and nursing associations are authorized by provincial legislation to certify PNA members, except in the Northwest Territories, where the government certifies PNAs. Certification requires successful completion of a college diploma in practical nursing, the certification examination of the Canadian Nurses Association Testing services and membership in the local association. Certification is maintained by membership in the association. Certified PNAs are recognized across Canada.

While PNAs are organized in autonomously chartered organizations, their certification is closely aligned with associations of professional nursing. In some jurisdictions, they have membership status within a nursing organization (e.g., College of Nurses of Ontario). Their

FIGURE 11

CERTIFYING PRACTICAL NURSING ASSISTANTS (PNAs)

PNAs may provide basic supportive care to patients whose conditions are stable and basic supportive nursing care to acutely ill patients under the supervision of registered nurses. Their registration is required in provinces/territories under associations or colleges of registered nurses and/or registered practical and nursing assistants. These associations (usually of registered nurses) are the certification authorities in the provinces. (Certification is by government agencies in the two territories.)

Education

- college diploma in practical nursing/nursing assisting;
- international training assessed as equivalent to Canadian college education;
- certificate in cardiopulmonary resuscitation.

Experience

- practicum experience as part of college training.

Examination

- examination by Canadian Nurses Association Testing Services required (except in Quebec).

Eligibility

- membership in provincia/territorial practical nursing or nursing association/college (affiliated with the Canadian Association of Practical Nursing Assistants);
- Canadian citizen or landed immigrant.

Renewal

- maintain annual membership in provincial/ territorial PNA or nursing association/college.

Portability

- certification recognized across Canada.

Fees

- $100 for certification;
- $100 to $125 annual membership fees in PNA or nursing association/college.

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certification examination is administered by a national association of nurses. These features illustrate a certification process in which one occupation supports another. The following case study is of an occupation whose certification is fully administered by another occupation.

Pharmacy Technician

In Ontario, pharmacy technicians (PTs) are members of the Ontario College of Pharmacists, following the *Ontario Regulated Health Professions Act (1993)*. Figure 12 describes their certification process.

As may be seen, the certification of PTs is based upon education, experience, examination and membership in the College. The experience presented as qualification must be verified by a pharmacist certified by the College and the examination is administered by the College. Thus, the certification of PTs may be seen as falling under the direct authority of pharmacists.

General Accountants

Few occupations are defined in federal legislation but the Certified General Accountants Association of Canada (CGAAC) was chartered as a self-regulating profession by an act of

FIGURE 12

CERTIFYING PHARMACY TECHNICIANS (PTs)

PTs work in community and hospital pharmacies or clinics. Duties may involve dispensing, inventory control, records maintenance, typing, some cash register work and operation of computer terminals. With experience, job opportunities expand to pharmaceutical representatives and possibly research laboratories and industry.

Education

- graduated from one year pharmacy technician program of community college or private vocational school approved by Ministry of Training and Education of Ontario; or
- graduated from program in another jurisdiction of equal or greater length and having similar content to Ontario programs.

Experience

- 200 full-time or equivalent hours of experience verified by a Certified Pharmacist in Ontario in six months prior to application; or
- employed as pharmacist or pharmacy technician in another jurisdiction, performing functions prescribed by the Ontario College of Pharmacists (OCP) and having 3,500 hours of verified employment as a PT in Ontario.

Examination

- Pharmacy Technician Certification Examination administered by the OCP.

Eligibility

- Canadian citizen or permanent resident;
- demonstrated fluency in French or English.

Renewal

- membership in good standing in the OCP.

Portability

- within Ontario, accepted across Canada.

Fees

- $27 for credential evaluation;
- $107 for certification examination;
- $100 OCP membership fees.

Parliament in 1913. Provincial associations were incorporated by legislatures as membership organizations. Certification is based upon both appropriate post-secondary education and a program of study administered by the national CGA association. Figure 13 summarizes the CGA certification process.

The CGA certification system is open to all disciplines or prior study but applicants must have completed university level post-secondary education before being considered for the CGA program of study and eventual certification. The course of study itself is comprehensive and may be up to six years long, so entry to the occupation is very restricted.

FIGURE 13

CERTIFYING GENERAL ACCOUNTANTS (CGAs)

CGAs plan and administer accounting systems to provide records of assets, liabilities and financial transactions. They may function as accountants, auditors, tax specialists and financial advisors and hold a wide range of responsibilities from corporate controller to chief executive officer, from internal auditor to vice-president of operations and from financial analyst to director of finance.

Education

- presently no post-secondary credential required;
- university degree/equivalent required in Quebec and to be required nationally in fall of 1998;
- 17-course program of study administered by the Certified General Accountants Association of Canada (CGAAC), completed in two to six years;
- program of study may be through correspondence, distance education, classroom study and tutorials;
- acceptance of some post-secondary education as appropriate training (e.g., economics, business, law).

Experience

- two years of practical work experience prior to or concurrent with program of study;
- demonstrated increasing employment responsibility;
- practical experience questionnaire attested to by employer.

Examination

- minimum of four examinations where prior education is recognized as covering program of study;
- maximum of 17 examinations, one on each of the courses in the program of study, where no prior learning is presented or accepted;
- there is specialization within the program of study and certification specialization is being planned.

Eligibility

- prior college/university education may be of any discipline;
- membership in a recognized CGA association in Canada.

Renewal

- maintain membership in good standing in a provincial CGA association;
- completion of a program of continuing education.

Portability

- certification portable among members associations of the CGAAC.

Fees

- $400 to $700 per course in program of study;
- $600 to $700 annually for provincial and national membership.

The examination and experience requirements of certification assure the current competence of applicants for certification. The continuing professional development requirements are aimed at assuring the continuing and contemporary competence of practitioners.

Realtors

Canadian Realtors have a system of certification that recognizes that practitioners specialize in a range of realty practices. It is an open system in that no particular post-secondary education is required prior to undertaking the program of study administered by the Canadian

FIGURE 14

CERTIFYING REALTORS

Realtors sell and broker the sale of residential, commercial, industrial and investment properties. After a few years in sales, some specialize in finance, appraisal, leasing, property development, property management and other real estate areas.

Education

- high school diploma is entry level;
- Realtor program of study is required (slightly different across jurisdictions);
- prelicensing course required—five week correspondence orientation to the practice of Realtors;
- agents' licensing program comprises six courses (about 150 hours), including brokerage, law, financing, office management, appraisal and one of commercial real estate, property management, residential or rural;
- additional program of study offered for qualification as a market value appraiser;
- articling courses (40 hours each) on property law, appraisal and mortgage financing;
- some or all of the program of study may be taken by correspondence and course work at community colleges in some jurisdictions.

Experience

- two years of articling with a licensed real estate broker;
- five years of experience in licensed sales required for market value appraiser.

Examination

- provincial licensing examination through the provincial Realtor association within one month of completing the program of study.

Eligibility

- resident of province of licensing;
- resident of Canada for one year;
- continuing employment with a licensed real estate broker;
- persons with comparable professional training may be granted full or partial exemption from the program of study (e.g., lawyers, chartered accountants);
- continuing employment with or as a licensed real estate broker.

Renewal

- annual renewal of membership in provincial association;
- continuing education every two years;
- demonstration of liability insurance.

Portability

- certification/licensing accepted by provincial affiliates of the Canadian Real Estate Association.

Fees

- $400 to $500 for registration as student and prelicensing course;
- $325 to $425 per licensing course;
- $50 to $75 annual national association fee;
- $30 to $200 annual provincial association fee;
- $200 to $2,000 annual local real estate board fee to access Multiple Listing Service.

Real Estate Association (CREA). Licensing as a Realtor is required in all provinces through real estate boards and provincial real estate associations.

The primary means to certification is through a sequence of courses of study. The program of study is generally completed by correspondence, classroom study offered by the provincial association of Realtors or through community college study in some locales. There are specializations within CREA certification as agents, brokers and appraisers in the marketing of residential, industrial and rural properties.

Figure 14 describes the certification system to meet the provincial licensing requirements for Realtors. There are a sizeable number of national and international certification processes for real estate specialists. Some are within the licensing requirements, some exceed them and some do not meet them. All recognize the requirement for core knowledge in the sale and management of real estate.

The Real Estate Institute of Canada, which cooperates with but is not affiliated with the CREA, certifies six specialties: appraisal, property management, leasing officer, real estate finance, residential management, residential underwriter and unlicensed real estate executives. Certification in each requires a period of practical experience (two to five years), an Institute program of study (six to 10 courses) and continuing membership in the Institute. Depending upon the specialty, membership in a real estate board and/or CREA may also be required.

Certification by the Institute and like organizations is completely voluntary and represents practitioners' commitment to the occupation and professional aspirations.

Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists

The certification of speech pathologists and audiologists (SPA) is required in Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario and New Brunswick and is voluntary through the professional associations in the other provinces. Certification is administered for provincial associations by the Canadian Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists (CASLPA). Figure 15 describes the CASLPA certification process.

The process is fairly straightforward, being based upon completion of a master's degree with appropriate practica experience, successful completion of the CASLPA certification examination and membership in CASLPA. Certification is maintained by continuing membership in CASLPA and 45 hours of continuing education every three years.

SPA certification is the first illustration of a mandated self-regulating occupation, which is directly based upon a post-secondary Canadian education in its discipline and the demonstration of competence through examination. The following two case studies illustrate these features within training program accreditation regimes.

FIGURE 15

CERTIFYING SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGISTS AND AUDIOLOGISTS (SPAs)

SPAs assess and treat the speech, language and hearing disabled. Working with educators, medical, psychological, social work and rehabilitation personnel, the speech-language pathologist and audiologist are usually part of a comprehensive team of rehabilitation specialists. Their services are available through hospitals, schools, rehabilitation centres, government agencies, universities and private practice.

Education

- Canadian master's degree in speech-language pathology or audiology or equivalent.

Experience

- minimum 350 hours of clinical practicum specifically distributed by types of client and assessment/treatment functions/skills.

Examination

- CASLPA certification examinations in audiology and speech-language pathology.

Eligibility

- international credentials accepted, exam required;
- exchange arrangement pending with American speech and hearing association.

Renewal

- maintain membership in CASLPA;
- accrue 45 continuing education equivalents over three-year period.

Portability

- certification is national and thus portable across Canada.

Fees

- $250 for initial certification (exam and assessment);
- $200 annual full membership fee ($700 in Ontario).

Engineering Technician/Technologist

While engineering technology is the example used in this case study, it applies equally to architectural and electronics technology. Certification is not required under provincial legislation but some provincial associations of technicians and technologists (T&Ts) have acquired certification authority. Certification is by provincial T&T associations through their federation with the Canadian Council of Technicians and Technologists (CCTT), which certifies practitioners on behalf of the provincial associations. Figure 16 summarizes the certification process for T&Ts.

The principal criterion for the certification of T&Ts is graduation from an accredited college program. If applicants' educations are not obtained from an accredited program, they are required to present the original/notarized detailed syllabus or course outline they studied for comprehensive evaluation against a national reference standard. Applicants qualify for certification with membership in a provincial association and completion of an examination on applicable law and professional ethics.

The following case study of engineering certification illustrates the process of most occupations usually identified as "professions."

FIGURE 16

CERTIFYING ENGINEERING TECHNICIANS AND TECHNOLOGISTS (T&Ts)

The technician/technologist may carry out a wide range of complex work processes under general direction in areas such as engineering, design production, marketing, maintenance, quality control, quantity surveying, inspection and supervision of construction activities. He/she may be employed as a technical sales representative and in all of the levels of responsibility related to technical sales.

Education

- education must be obtained from a college program accredited by the Canadian Technology Accreditation Board and demonstrated through copy of diploma/certificate and transcripts;
- normally two-year certificate from an accredited program or equivalent for technicians;
- normally three-year diploma from an accredited program or equivalent for technologists.

Experience

- two years of current practical experience (minimum one year Canadian experience) in a position of responsibility;
- documentation of experience, verified by references.

Examination

- on law and ethics required of all candidates;
- on the discipline of technology for non-graduates of an accredited program.

Eligibility

- persons with the above credentials.

Renewal

- maintenance of membership in good standing with provincial association.

Portability

- certification portable among provincial constituent members of CCTT, which are subject to CCTT audit of certification requirements every five years.

Fees

- annual fees to provincial association ranging from $100 to $200, depending upon discipline;
- initial membership fees covers cost of certification.

Engineers

Provincial legislation names provincial engineering associations as the engineering licensing bodies. The Canadian Association of Professional Engineers (CCPE) is the federation of provincial associations, a standing committee of which is the Canadian Engineering Accreditation Board (CEAB). The CEAB accredits programs by specialization (e.g., civil, electrical, petroleum engineering).

The principal criterion for the certification of professional engineers (PENG) is university graduation from an accredited university engineering program. The degree and required experience are taken as evidence of professional competence. The qualifying examination, unlike those of other occupations, focuses upon the practice of the profession more than upon competence. These credentials and membership in the mandated provincial professional association maintains a practitioners' certification.

FIGURE 17

CERTIFYING PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERS (PENGs)

Engineers work in government, engineering consulting firms, electrical utilities, research and educational institutions, communications, manufacturing, processing, transportation and many other industries. They plan, design, evaluate, research and manage projects for the construction and repair of structures, electronic operating systems and chemical processes.

Education

- undergraduate degree from a university engineering program accredited by the Canadian Engineering Accreditation Board.

Experience

- typically, four years of journalled, on-the-job experience under the supervision of a certified PENG.

Examination

- professional practice examination, administered by the Canadian Council of Professional Engineers (CCPE), covering professional practice and ethics, engineering law and professional liability.

Eligibility

- Canadian citizen or permanent resident;
- references from certified professional engineers;
- English and/or French language proficiency.

Renewal

- membership in good standing in provincial association;
- continuing professional development being introduced.

Portability

- across all member associations of the CCPE.

Fees

- $100 to $175 for initial certification;
- $165 to $175 annual membership fees in provincial associations

Underlying Conditions

The preceding case studies illustrate different approaches to certification. The differences among occupations may be bewildering but reasonably obvious, common general conditions underlie the qualifications required for certification.

Education

The sufficient condition in certification is that practitioners complete the prescribed education. For most occupations, the required education is obtained through the study of a particular program at a post-secondary educational institution. In some cases, the program is accredited (e.g., technicians/technologists) and others it is not (e.g., practical nursing assistants).

As we have seen, a number of occupations require and provide a program of self-study beyond (e.g., pharmaceutical manufacturers representatives) or instead of (e.g., Realtors) post-secondary education. While they may allow credit against their programs of study for applicable post-secondary education, it is the occupation's program of study that is the educational standard to qualify for certification.

Experience

A usual necessary condition of certification is that practitioners demonstrate that they are currently working in the field and/or have had continuing experience in it. Applicants must be able to show that they have practised the occupation in some capacity.

Some occupations only require that the applicants have had practicum experience as part of their educations (e.g., speech-language pathologists and audiologists). Particularly where the occupation offers its own program of study, practitioners are required to be practising concurrent with study (e.g., financial planners). Some occupations also require verification that the applicant has had increasing responsibility over the period of required experience (e.g., chartered general accountants).

Examination

A common necessary condition is that practitioners are successful in qualifying examinations. They must be able to demonstrate the knowledge and abilities required by the occupation.

When the required education is from a post-secondary program of study, the examination is most frequently a qualifying requirement of the certification body (e.g., practical nursing assistants). When the required education is through the occupation's program of study, examinations are usually taken after completion of particular courses (e.g., Realtors). In some cases, both course and qualifying examinations are required, as well as demonstration of skill in the occupation (e.g., financial planners).

Competence

Taken together, the sufficient condition (education) and necessary conditions (experience and examination) are the means by which practitioners demonstrate their competence to practise the occupation. Ultimately, when occupational associations certify their practitioners, they are certifying to the public that those practitioners can competently provide the particular services of the occupation.

Consequently, the certifying authorities place the onus on applicants to demonstrate, by satisfying the necessary and sufficient conditions, that they are able to apply the knowledge and skills of the occupation in both theory and practice. Increasingly, the authorities are requiring that certified practitioners are current on knowledge and applications through continuing education or professional development.

Membership

Another sufficient condition of certification is that practitioners are members of the certifying or affiliated occupational organizations. At one level, membership and the resulting revenue to the associations allow them to provide services to and communications with members.

However, membership is also a means of control over certified practitioners. It allows the certification body to know who its practitioners are and where they are located. It can thus be publicly accountable for the practitioners that they certify. Moreover, it allows the certification body to intervene in the practice of members who may not be providing quality or ethical services. Intervention may take the form of requiring re-certification or, ultimately, removing the practitioner's certification. Without the requirement of membership, consequences of malpractice cannot be enforced.

Specialization

Some occupations grant specialized certification and it appears that this practice may be increasing. Specialization recognizes that some practitioners are specialized in the educations required of them (e.g., technicians and technologists). Specialization may also recognize that the practitioner is expert in a particular or limited area of the occupation or in a particular service setting (e.g., Realtor). A purpose of certification is to identify competent practitioners to the public. It makes sense that specialized practitioners be so identified, particularly when the discipline they practise cannot be generally applied.

Implications for Child Care

A series of publications and studies in progress provide information on Canadian child care practitioners for assessing the prospects of certification. These include *Our Child Care Workforce: From Recognition to Remuneration,*[29] *Caring for a Living*[30] and *Providing Home Child Care for a Living*[31]

While there is some question about the precise figures, the forthcoming child care sector study estimates that about 276,000 women provide child care in unlicensed settings (own home, child's home, school-aged or centre-based) and 57,000 provide services in licensed settings (centres and family homes). For the purposes of this study, these 330,000 women are the practitioners who might use a certification system. An estimated 27,000 people who provide other early childhood services (kindergarten, early intervention programs, and family resource centres) are not considered in this discussion, but could be part of a certification system.

There are a variety of settings in which child care services are provided: licensed centres, licensed family homes, licensed school-based, unlicensed family homes, unlicensed school-based and in the child's home. It is also noteworthy that almost five times as many

FIGURE 18

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF CHILD CARE PRACTITIONERS IN FOUR SERVICE SETTINGS

EDUCATION	SERVICE SETTING			
	In Child's Home ('97"	Unlicensed Home ('97)	Licensed Home ('96)	Licensed Centre ('91)
Less than high school diploma	22.7%	14.5%	15.2%	6.1%
High school diploma	49.7%	52.4%	48.9%	25.4%
Post-secondary certificate or diploma	20.5%	22.6%	27.6%	55.5%
University degree	7.1%	10.6%	8.3%	13.1%

child care practitioners provide services in unlicensed settings as in licensed settings. Provincial/territorial regulations do not require that service settings be licensed when there are fewer than three to eight children being cared for, including the practitioner's own young children. While such settings may become licensed, they do not have to. Child care is largely a free market in Canada.

The educational attainment of child care practitioners varies. Figure 18 summarizes the education level reported by practitioners in four settings. A clear majority of practitioners have a high school education or less and it is only in licensed centres, where there are provincial/territorial educational requirements, that the majority of practitioners (about 70 per cent) have completed post-secondary education.

Little is know about the programs of study by practitioners who have completed post-secondary education. Not all practitioners with certificates, diplomas or degrees have studied ECCE or equivalent programs. For example, about 60 per cent of licensed centre practitioners have ECCE-related post-secondary credentials.

An ECCE educational criterion might be feasible if practitioners without formal post-secondary ECCE training could demonstrate degrees of equivalence through prior learning assessment or professional development studies but the information in this regard is limited. About 78 per cent of licensed family home care providers report annual participation in at least one professional development activity. About 85 per cent of centre staffs (most of whom have ECCE training) report annual professional development.

One means, albeit limited, of inferring the competence of practitioners is their experience in providing services. About 95 per cent of centre staffs report more than one year and about 70 per cent report more than three years of experience. Licensed family home practitioners report comparable amounts of experience. In both cases, most experience is in licensed service settings.

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In 1994, there were between 100 and 125 membership-based child care organizations in Canada.[32] Most are local groups with relatively few members. All provinces and territories had at least one and as many as 12 organizations representing all practitioners or those in particular settings. There are about five national membership-based organizations. Were there to be a child care certification system, it would presumably have its administration within this mix of organizations.

Obviously, the affiliation rates of practitioners are sufficient to maintain a great many groups, organizations and associations. However, little is known about the particular affiliation rates of practitioners in different settings. About 45 per cent of licensed family home practitioners reported that they were members of at least one organization. About 75 per cent of them were members of a local organization and about 20 per cent were members of provincial/territorial associations.

It appears that a child care practitioner certification system would constitute a significant challenge. There is great diversity among practitioners and beyond experience, the lowest common denominators of competence are below usual thresholds of certification criteria. The creation of a certification system within this context would require a high degree of commitment from the occupation to a long and involved process.

Certification is a significant, complex and costly undertaking which requires that an occupation knows what it wants and why. Child care practitioners would have to be clear about their motivations for creating a certification system and deliberate in assessing the possible consequences. Some very important questions include:

1. What would be the purpose of a certification system (e.g., incremental development, exclusion of certain practitioners)?

2. Who wants certification (a plurality of practitioners or elites)?

3. Who would win (e.g., ECCE educators, better qualified practitioners) and who would lose (e.g., less qualified practitioners) under a certification system?

4. What benefits would accrue from certification (e.g., quality services, mobility, wages)?

5. What consequences might there be (e.g., division in the occupation, consumer or government resistance)?

6. Is the sector sufficiently committed to the long haul?

Conclusions and Recommendations

This section presents conclusions about and directions that seem possible in the establishment of accreditation and certification systems for child care in Canada. But Canadian child care is a highly diverse occupation. Different jurisdictions have created different regulatory frameworks for their ECCE training programs and child care services. Diverse child care education and service approaches have evolved, as well as great diversity among practitioners and child care settings.

An attempt has been made to be sensitive to this diversity. However, occupational validation is normative in its orientation. Consequently, readers may not see themselves in some of the conclusions reached.

The following accreditation and certification recommendations are not addressed to particular organizations. It is simply not clear who has the mandate or authority to act on them. Organizations and individuals across Canada will likely find one another and assess together the utility of collaborative action.

Occupational Validation

Canadian child care has a long history but in most jurisdictions, it has only become a formally organized and regulated service in the past 30 years, which is relatively young as far as recognized occupations are concerned.

This 30-year period has been marked by a rapid (now leveling) growth in services, educational programs and organization of its practitioners. It has reached a point where, in spite of its diversity, child care is a mature occupation. As many in the occupation have vigorously noted, however, it has not been granted the acceptance and recognition that it deserves, given the importance of the work done by its practitioners.

Nonetheless, child care has developed a base of practitioners, structures and institutions upon which to further formalize itself as a recognized occupation. Successful formal recognition would seem to depend upon forging consensus and acceptance for this. Various interests will have to find common ground to achieve occupational validation.

Accreditation and certification systems cannot be decreed. There is no single agency or organization that can cause them to happen. Perhaps because of the diversity of interests and the various fears that may have to be overcome in validation activities, the approach to validation will have to be long-term, carefully phased, developmental and inclusive of all interests. While organizations like the Canadian Child Care Federation, the Association of Canadian Community Colleges and provincial/territorial associations can facilitate occupational validation initiatives, they will have to attract a broad consortium of practitioners and their organizations to the cause.

Potentially, there are sound bases upon which to build some form of accreditation and certification systems with child care. Whether there is sufficient interest in either or both is not yet known. Those in the sector who are interested will have first to find one another and organize themselves to proceed. Then, they will have to undertake persuasive and sustained marketing campaigns among their peers and colleagues to build sufficient consensus to successfully proceed on both fronts.

There will be (perhaps overwhelming) resistance to accreditation and certification initiatives. The root causes of this resistance will vary. Some practitioners will argue that the people in the sector cannot afford the costs. Some will see the end result as exclusion. Some will be suspicious of change. It will be necessary to clearly show what accreditation and certification might entail.

To that end, it would be useful to incrementally implement approaches through various stages. Pilot or demonstration projects could provide examples of how the validation systems might work. They would also provide bases from which regional and/or national systems might evolve. It would be easier to persuade acceptance if the systems' advocates have relevant benefits to point to. Moreover, demonstration projects could evolve from "naturally occurring" initiatives. Accreditation and certification will likely be more acceptable if they are seen to be based upon current practices, rather than as totally new. For example, training programs in some provinces have regular meetings and exchanges, which might serve as a basis for some form of accreditation.

Accreditation or certification processes will most likely fail if they are seen to be exclusive. Programs and practitioners who might be excluded and those sympathetic to this potential fate would likely represent enough opposition to make the processes either impossible or irrelevant. To counter such opposition and treat accreditation and certification as developmental initiatives, models should be open. There should be a place for everyone who wants to participate and participation should be voluntary.

Another significant element in the validation of the occupation of child care is an understanding of what is being accredited and/or certified. This understanding lies within a profile of the occupation. Practitioners, and those who educate them, have to agree on the skills, knowledge, task and performance standards that practitioners should meet. Such standards are expressed in an occupational competencies profile, from which all else can follow. Further, an occupational profile is neutral as to the education and experience required of practitioners. Education and experience may be inferred but theoretically, an individual can match the profile through a variety of backgrounds.

A competencies profile is open to all who can match it. It is in its application that it may be expressed in accreditation and certification processes. If no other occupational validation initiative were undertaken, a child care competency profile should be collaboratively developed within the sector.

Recommendations

Subject to the recommendations in following sections, it is recommended that:

1. Above all and prior to the formalization of any accreditation or certification processes, a child care competency profile be developed to define child care practitioner competencies. (The CCCF is currently undertaking a Quality Assurance Project. Some of the products of the project could contribute to the elaboration of a child care competency profile. Other useful inputs to a profile include Ontario's *Early Childhood Education Program Standards* and British Columbia's *Child Care Sector Occupational Competencies*.)

2. Initiatives to develop accreditation and certification processes be undertaken simultaneously and follow from the child care competency profile.

3. Accreditation and certification processes be open and inclusive of training programs and practitioners, respectively, for a period of at least five years.

4. Accreditation and certification processes be for the purpose of the development of programs and practitioners toward reasonably common standards of outcomes and competence, respectively, for a period of at least five years.

5. Accreditation and certification processes first be on pilot bases among willing programs and practitioners, respectively, to demonstrate their viability and scope.

Accreditation

The accreditation of ECCE training programs by a practitioner organization does not appear to be possible. There is not sufficient affiliation and/or concentration of practitioners in an organization for basing an accreditation system upon practitioner consensus. No organization has the mandate or authority to undertake program accreditation.

Consequently, an accreditation system will likely have to be based upon Canadian ECCE programs becoming, in whole or part, mutually regulating. The system used by the Canadian Association of University Schools of Nursing may provide a model.

If ECCE training programs took the lead in accreditation, that would be a way to develop commonality among their programs of study. Additionally, it could be a foundation for building commitment and acceptance for occupational validation among institutions and governments and begin an incremental process toward a full validation framework.

It is not clear that most Canadian ECCE programs are ready or able to meet the stringent criteria of accreditation that other occupations employ. It seems to make more sense that any accreditation process should first aim to benchmark the quality and capacities of ECCE programs and then develop them in reasonably common standards of education. Thus, the focus of any system should be upon program development rather than program accreditation per se. The distinction is between programs being mutually supportive in their respective development and improvements, as opposed to deciding upon the worth of individual programs. A program development approach would build upon and foster the resiliency of ECCE programs, to keep them vigorous and improving.

The ultimate objective of a program development system should be to assure the success of ECCE programs in producing graduates that match the child care competency profile. Thus, programs' self-study should be to determine how curricula, practica and learning outcomes result in such graduates. (Within its Quality Assurance Project, the CCCF is piloting a program self-assessment guide. While the guide may not be explicitly addressed at learning outcomes, it may demonstrate a useful self-study methodology.)

It is not likely that all or most of Canadian ECCE training programs would immediately participate in a program development initiative. They would probably like to see it in action and assess its benefits before participation. Thus, it would be best to demonstrate the system in one or more regions before taking it to a national level. It is known that ECCE training programs in British Columbia, Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec meet on regular bases. Perhaps one or more of these provinces could serve as pilot locations for a system of mutual program development.

A desirable pilot project feature would include both college and university programs. The interest would be in the bases and processes of articulation of credits from the college(s) to the university. There are already a number of university programs that accept or have articulation arrangements with colleges. These might serve as naturally occurring initiatives that could be covered within pilot(s).

In provinces that do not have an organization of ECCE programs, provincial child care organizations (and/or the CCCF) could provide the administrative base for the pilot project(s).

While not strictly an accreditation issue, the role of ECCE training programs in continuing professional development should be a consideration in continuing education and professional development programming. Presently, most ECCE training programs serve a comparatively small portion of child care practitioners. Practitioners without formal ECCE training have demonstrated a willingness to undertake professional development. They constitute a potentially large market for ECCE training programs and an opportunity for the training programs to offer practitioner educations that systematically upgrade them toward ECCE credentials.

A number of pilot projects in a number of provinces could serve national purposes if they replicated one another as much as possible. A common protocol could be adopted by the respective pilots and added to as necessary to accommodate local considerations. The value of replication is that the results of the respective pilots would be cumulative.

Recommendations

Consistent with the general recommendations above, it is recommended that:

6. An ECCE training program accreditation system per se not be established at this time.

7. ECCE training programs collectively create a mutually supportive approach to their continuing improvement through the demonstration of a program development system.

8. Within or across regions, one or more pilot projects be undertaken by collaborating ECCE training programs to demonstrate mutual program development.

9. Usual methods of accreditation (self-study and team assessment) be employed in mutual program development, primarily for the identification and exchange of improvements in program contents and outcomes.

10. The referent standards of mutual program development be the child care competency profile and assessment be in terms of the programs' success in producing the learning outcomes and competencies that it describes.

11. Where more than one pilot is undertaken, there be a common protocol that allows the results of the pilots to be compared and combined in assessing their potential regional or national application.

12. Part of the developmental focus be upon expanded and accessible continuing education and professional development courses of study for all child care practitioners.

Certification

A child care certification system would not be an easy matter. The occupation is very heterogeneous in the education and experience of practitioners and settings of service. It would be difficult to evolve a certification system that has the consensus of and accommodates all or most practitioners.

That said, a certification system could be comparatively easily established among practitioners with post-secondary ECCE training. Their circumstance is analogous to the training and certification of engineering/applied science technicians and technologists. ECCE certificates may be seen as comparable to technician training and ECCE diplomas as comparable to technologist training. Accepting that not all certificate training and not all diploma training is equivalent, they do provide normative periods of training upon which to base applications for certification.

The certification of child care practitioners without ECCE training or equivalence is much more complicated. The only condition that they might commonly meet is a period of experience in providing child care services. Particularly when such experience is unsupervised and undocumented, the value of it cannot be assessed or competencies inferred. However, child care practitioners in this circumstance constitute the vast majority of Canadian child care practitioners. Any certification system that excluded them would at best be unrepresentative of the occupation and at worst, elitist.

Any child care certification system should be designed to be as inclusive as possible. That is, it should be open to all practitioners and recognize all who meet reasonable standards of competence. To be such, it is likely that a certification system would have to have categories of certification that recognize core competencies, education, periods of experience and, perhaps, settings of work.

While a certification system based upon education and experience would be attractive because of its relative simplicity, it would be a significant stretch to imply competence or gradations of competence from only these criteria. Some measure of competencies would seem necessary if certification is to signify practitioner competence to the public.

Measures of competence should be developed from the child care competency profile. If there were to be categories of certification, then the competency profile would have to be translated into gradations of knowledge, abilities and skills. Presumably there are a core set of standards that all practitioners would have to meet regardless of category. Thereafter, the standards within each category might recognize different qualifications. The necessary basis of a child care certification system would seem to be examinations of competence.

At the risk of being presumptuous, there appears to be the prospect of four categories of certification, the titles of which are suggestive only:

1. Child Care Specialist:
   having a diploma and/or degree and five years experience

2. Child Care Educator:
   having a diploma and one year experience

3. Child Care Teacher:
   having a certificate and one year experience

4. Child Care Provider:
   having high school, recognized professional development/orientation and five years experience

An examination of competence could be developed for each category. The examinations should be subject to challenge so that practitioners may achieve successively higher levels of certification. For example, a provider with six years of verified experience could challenge the teacher examination or the teacher with two years of verified experience could challenge the educator examination.

A time-limited, fifth category might be contemplated as a grandparent clause in the provider category for practitioners who do not have any of the required educational requirements but have a designated period (for example, seven years) of verified experience providing child care services.

No certification model will gain immediate acceptance among child care providers because they are simply not well enough organized or committed to child care organizations that might be the certification agencies. Practitioners will likely have to see how a certification system works before they commit to it.

Again, an incremental approach seems to be advisable. Child care associations in one or more provinces (and nationally, where a national perspective is the anticipated outcome) could collaborate in piloting approaches to certification. Where more than one province was a pilot site, a common protocol should be used to allow the comparison and combination of results.

Any pilots would have to have the support and, hopefully, participation of provincial government child care authorities to assure that the model is consistent with and not undermined by government policy. As well, college ECCE programs should be involved if there is to be a professional development component.

Given the likely complexities and openness of a certification system, the pilots should probably run for at least five years. This would allow examples of examination challenges and achievable participation rates among practitioners.

It is not clear how national in scope a certification system could be. The differences in provincial/territorial child care systems simply may not allow a national system—at least not for some years. Ideally, provincial/territorial child care policy would be sensitive to any certification system operating within its jurisdiction. It may be asking too much for all provinces and territories to be equally sensitive to a national system. For the foreseeable future then, it would probably be prudent to work towards a set of provincial/territorial certification systems, which could be based upon common predicates and processes and collaborative in facilitating the mobility of credentials.

It should be anticipated that any certification system, whether or not like the one proposed, will take a long time to be generally accepted and to mature. However, the prospect of acceptance by practitioners and others and practitioner pride in the system should result from a demonstration that it is:

- supported by child care organizations and ECCE training programs;
- open and inclusive; and
- based upon sensible indicators of competence.

Recommendations

Consistent with the initial general recommendations and complementary to recommendations on mutual program development, it is recommended that:

13. Open and inclusive child care certification systems be developed in provinces/territories where child care associations have the interest in and capacity to develop systems.

14. The certification systems be based upon education, verified experience and qualifying examinations of competence.

15. Challenge examinations of competence be developed from the child care competency profile and measure (at core and graduated levels) practitioner knowledge, skills, abilities and performance in providing child care services.

16. The development of certification systems be incremental through the pilot demonstration of model approach(es) to certification in one or more provinces/territories according to a protocol that allows for the comparison and combination of results from more than one pilot.

17. Pilot project(s) run for a period of at least five years to allow for the model(s) to experience the full range of judgements of credentials that are within its/their design.

18. ECCE training programs be partners in the pilots to provide professional development activities as may be needed to allow practitioners to meet or upgrade to required credentials.

Closing Thoughts

Occupational validation processes are costly and child care is not a wealthy occupational sector. Proceeding to mutual program development and certification systems will require funding and probably immense amounts of volunteer time from within the sector.

Occupational validation initiatives should not and need not start from scratch. The child care community, as illustrated at various points in this report, has generated and is generating an extensive body of knowledge on qualifications and competencies of child care practitioners. These can be synthesized into fairly comprehensive statements about the occupation and its base competencies for mutual program development and certification.

Other occupations can provide "off the shelf" approaches to accreditation and certification. Many have recently revised and modernized their criteria and processes. Close consultation with them could help the child care community avoid costly mistakes and build upon the lessons learned. Affiliation with the Association of Accrediting Agencies of Canada could provide rather direct access to the experiences of other occupations.

There may be sources of financial support for occupational validation initiatives. Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) has provided support in the development of professional competency profiles (e.g., to the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists). In light of the forthcoming child care sector study, the development of a child care competency profile may be seen by HRDC as a logical subsequent step. The proposed incremental approach, from pilots to mutual program development and certification, may fit the selection criteria of HRDC's Child Care Visions program. Some provinces/territorial governments may also see the pilots as worthy of financial support.

Occupational validation initiatives appear promising, with potential sources of assistance and support. Ultimately, however, these initiatives will depend upon the imagination and energies of Canada's child care practitioners and their educators.

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Professionalism and Quality

by Marilynn Kuhn

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Abstract

> *The search for a new paradigm of early childhood professionalism is not new.*
> *(Willer & Bredekamp, 1993)*
>
> *We must lay to rest the all-too-common assumption that working with young children is something anyone can do.*
> *(Bredekamp &, Willer, 1993)*

This issues paper is part of the Partners in Quality project of the Canadian Child Care Federation. It examines "professionalism" in the field of early childhood care and education (ECCE), focusing on the association with quality. The paper begins with a brief examination of professionalism, followed by a summary of themes from 17 key informant interviews. The next section outlines steps generally taken toward becoming a profession—defining the knowledge and practice of the occupation, setting and maintaining standards and developing an institutional infrastructure. Comments from the literature and key informants on issues specific to ECCE professionalization are included. The paper concludes with some reflections on the challenges and opportunities related to professionalization, with an aim to further dialogue on these issues.

Methodology

This paper is based on interviews with 17 key informants (listed in Appendix A) and a review of selected literature.

Each key informant received a framework related to professionalism prior to a telephone interview lasting approximately one hour. The interview framework (reprinted in Appendix B), was based largely on experiences associated with centre-based child care and used to focus discussion. Key informant interviews began with reflections on the relationship of professionalism and quality before moving to specific comments on:

- elements that define the ECCE field;
- the processes that are or could be involved in formalizing standards or enhancing practice; and
- institutions and resources to support these processes.

Although key informants spoke as individuals and not as official representatives of their employers, they spoke from their experience as:
- front-line practitioners from centre-based, family-based and other practice settings;
- program managers;
- residents of various political jurisdictions;
- members of groups seeking legislative recognition for early childhood educators;
- educators involved in ECCE pre-service training;
- trainers providing continuing education and support to practitioners;
- union representatives;
- consultants to provincial government departments; and
- members of provincial associations.

The key informants were respectful and thoughtful in their comments. While all had strong opinions on issues, they were sensitive to:
- the impact of personal experiences and values in shaping their thoughts about quality and professionalism;
- the challenge of being inclusive of the diversity of ECCE experiences; and
- the different circumstances in various legislative jurisdictions that have led to different responses to some of the issues.

Concepts and ideas from the literature are included as background to the issues and to frame the overall discussion.

Professionalism and Quality

> Professionalism is the ability to plan knowledgeably and competently to make a sustained difference: to diagnose and analyze situations, to select the most appropriate interventions, to apply them skillfully, and to describe why they were selected.[1]

This definition of professionalism describes the ability of a professional to do quality work. It also describes the kinds of decisions that many ECCE practitioners make many times a day in their interactions with children. Yet ECCE is not recognized as a profession and many practitioners in the field are ambivalent about being called professionals.[2] This lack of recognition and ambivalence present unique challenges in developing an understanding of professionalism appropriate to the occupation.

Fromberg identifies the following distinct characteristics of a profession:

- ethical performance;
- a high level of expertise and skill;
- a body of knowledge and skills not possessed by lay people;
- considerable autonomy in practice and entry to the profession;
- commensurate compensation; and
- professional organization.[3]

The reasons cited by key informants for supporting professionalization were similar to those outlined by Ferguson,[4] Bredekamp & Willer:[5]

- greater visibility for the work of caring for and educating young children;
- increased recognition and respect for practitioners as caring, knowledgeable and skilled;
- shared meanings and knowledge;
- greater coherence in practice across settings for young children;
- improved working conditions and financial compensation;
- mechanisms to establish and monitor standards and ethics of practice;
- a stronger voice for practitioners with governments and the public;
- enhanced communication with parents and with other professionals; and
- mechanisms for increased public accountability.

Most reservations expressed by key informants about professionalization were related to perceived negative attributes of an "expert" culture. Practitioners want their expertise recognized but reject other attributes linked to being an expert.

Being an expert is associated with:

- impersonal expert-client relationships, which are incompatible with a caring relationship with children and a supportive relationship with parents;
- hierarchy, which is inconsistent with collaborative approaches to working with other staff and relating to parents; and
- exclusivity, making entry into the profession very difficult.[6]

Another issue identified by a few key informants was the dissonance between relatively low-paying jobs with limited authority and professional attributes such as "commensurate compensation" and "relative autonomy." One key informant mentioned the dissonance of students encouraged to develop as professionals who then find their professionalism unsupported in the workplace.

Professionalism is supported by an infrastructure of institutions and processes such as professional associations, codes of ethics, certification and professional development opportunities. Elements of this infrastructure are present in most provinces/territories in Canada, developed largely by and for those involved with centre-based care. Most jurisdictions have professional associations. Several have developed a code of ethics. Processes for voluntary certification are in place in Nova Scotia, Ontario and British Columbia, where associations are also working towards legislative recognition of ECCE as a profession. Considerable work has been completed on the competencies required by early childhood practitioners preparing to work in child care centres, although there are no widely recognized, comprehensive standards of practice. Professional development opportunities are available, but few are linked to programs leading to credentials. Professionalization is a process of continuing to build this infrastructure systematically in a way that incorporates the specialized knowledge and values of early childhood practitioners.

While ECCE practitioners debate what professionalism means to them, attitudes towards professions in general are changing. Professions are under increasing public pressure to become more open and involve a wider range of stakeholders. Increasingly, their level of autonomy is being questioned and the involvement of outsiders is seen as important to public accountability.[7]

"Quality" is a multidimensional concept, not easily defined. Not surprisingly, key informants understood "quality" in ECCE as a function of many different factors, including human resources, administration, program, planning processes and material resources. Several saw "quality" as having a subjective or context-specific component that could be defined only through a dialogue among all the stakeholders—practitioners, parents, supervisors and funders.

"Professionalism," like "quality," has not been well-defined in ECCE. However, it is associated with high levels of skill, knowledge and performance of practitioners, which in turn are associated with the quality of children's early experience.

Several key informants thought that professionalism, like quality, was a reflection of many factors and not simply an individual commitment to competence. In their opinion, without a supportive infrastructure for professional practice, individual professionalism was difficult. Many elements of a supportive infrastructure for professionalism—standards of practice, a code of ethics, education and training—are also associated with quality. .

Themes from the Interviews

References to current social, political and economic trends or issues were woven throughout key informant interviews. Most issues were raised in terms of the challenges they pose to pursuing professionalism. A few were seen as windows of opportunity. Although the following is a synthesis of views expressed by key informants and does not represent a consensus among them, each person interviewed did, in some way, comment on the importance of the current climate to the process of professionalization.

Research

In recent years, there has been a growing awareness of the importance of stimulating and caring environments in early childhood to children's long-term development. Research has begun to influence policy development and how some professionals approach working with children and families. Key informants saw this as both an opportunity and a challenge to early childhood practitioners.

As an opportunity, this research is leading to increased recognition of the contributions of ECCE practitioners to healthy child development. Such recognition has resulted in more invitations to practitioners to participate with other professionals in emerging structures for collaboration and consultation related to children's development.

The challenge, according to some key informants, is that many practitioners are not familiar with recent research and those who are informed are uncomfortable participating in interdisciplinary activities. While they know what they do is important, they lack the language or the confidence to discuss why they do it.

Political and Economic Issues

While each province and territory has unique political features, many key informants identified similar political and economic trends. Governments, in general, are committed to reducing public spending. Social programs have been targets of fiscal restraint. This climate is stressful for many, including those involved in ECCE and can create uncertainty and hopelessness concerning the possibility for positive change. Discussion and movement towards professionalization can be difficult in this climate.

The current government trends of devolution and privatization also concerned several key informants. The devolution of provincial responsibilities to lower levels of government, if it is done without coordination and appropriate resources, could further fragment and weaken an already inadequate system of supporting and monitoring child care. Privatization was a concern in two ways: the expansion of private training institutions with inadequate mechanisms for accountability and government downloading of regulatory responsibilities with insufficient funding to professional associations. The privatization of training is a complex issue beyond the scope of this paper. It presents challenges in terms of competition with public education systems for students and training dollars and in terms of lack of accountability to recognized standards for practitioner preparation. Government downloading of regulatory responsibilities is a hypothetical problem. This would happen within the context of legislative recognition of ECCE as a profession. One reason for legislative recognition is to establish processes to increase accountability. Several key informants feared that, given the attitudes of some governments, the process could lead to less rather than more accountability because of a lack of resources.

Although the provinces and territories have authority for ECCE, most key informants stressed the importance of early childhood initiatives supported by the federal government. Federal support is seen as important for keeping ECCE on the public agenda, in the development and dissemination of shared resources and in sustaining a national infrastructure as a vehicle to develop principles and guidelines that contribute to a coherent understanding of ECCE.

Issues in the Field

Key informants from several jurisdictions commented on apathy and low levels of energy among practitioners. No single cause was suggested, but several contributing factors were mentioned including: discouragement with government cutbacks; increasing stress as a result of funding cutbacks and/or uncertainty about the future; ongoing lack of public support and recognition for the work; and a lack of leadership within individual work environments. One key informant wondered if one cause of increasing apathy might be the fact that qualified practitioners entering the field become disillusioned when the realities of practice do not support the level of "professionalism" for which they have been prepared in their training.

Perceived and actual differences of philosophy, practice and institutional affiliation have divided practitioners in family and centre-based care. These differences pose a challenge to developing an inclusive definition of an ECCE profession. Some key informants saw trends in research and practice that could begin to bridge this gap. Research confirming the strong interrelationship between care and education in healthy child development could begin to break down attitudes that have characterized care and education as opposing rather than complementary approaches. Also, increasing appreciation for the importance of building positive relationships with children's families could help bridge the gap between the two groups.

All key informants stated that efforts to define a child care "professional" should be independent of specific practice settings. Most stated explicitly or implicitly that the "profession" should be defined by focusing on the needs of the child and the knowledge and skills needed in the education and care of young children.

Some key informants were concerned that discussions of "professionalism" focus unduly on the individual practitioner, without consideration for the impact of the workplace and the broader system. They expressed concern that this focus on individual competence could place unrealistic expectations on individual practitioners working in the resource-poor child care system.

Practitioners have repeatedly identified a lack of recognition and respect as a key concern.[9] Their work is often characterized as babysitting or as something that all women do naturally, minimizing the knowledge and skill needed. Several key informants linked this lack of recognition to low self-esteem among practitioners and to the absence of supportive public policies.

Professionalization, advocacy and unionization are all strategies to improve the status of ECCE.[10] Several key informants felt that these strategies should be seen as complementary. Professionalization highlights the expertise of practitioners, advocacy stresses public policy and unionization focuses on workplace conditions. All three can contribute to increasing respect and recognition and improving working conditions for practitioners. One key informant observed that divisions related to the relative merits of various strategies were more pronounced in large centres than in smaller communities where practitioners tend to collaborate to achieve shared objectives.

Becoming a Profession

Central to the process of professionalization is setting standards to distinguish professional practice and establishing mechanisms to maintain and monitor these standards. A central argument for setting standards is the need to ensure public health, safety and security.[11] Standards are thought to achieve this by ensuring the initial and continuing competence of practitioners and their ethical practice.

The process of setting standards is one of consensus-building among all stakeholders.[12] The starting point is to define qualifications or performance criteria for the occupation and then choose the tasks for setting standards. Standards may include input standards (the knowledge and skills needed), process standards (how tasks are carried out) and performance standards (the results).[13] This section looks at the core base of knowledge on which standards are built and at the processes and institutions needed to establish and maintain these standards.

Defining the Field

If professionalism is "the ability to plan knowledgeably and competently to make a sustained difference: to diagnose and analyze situations, to select the most appropriate interventions, to apply them skillfully and to describe why they were selected,"[14] then the tools of professionalism are:

- a specialized knowledge base;
- the ability to apply that knowledge skillfully in practice; and
- ethical guidelines for determining the acceptability and effectiveness of a particular choice.

> Knowledge base:
> Having a specialized body of knowledge that is shared by all members is one of the distinguishing characteristics of a profession.[15]

The knowledge base of a profession is the foundation on which career structures, training and standards of practice are built. It incorporates both theory and practice and it is dynamic, changing over time with inputs from both researchers and practitioners. The knowledge base defines both the areas of expertise unique to a profession and its relationship with related fields.[16]

The core knowledge base of a profession should be reflected in the curricula used to educate and train practitioners. Considerable work has been done within community college systems across Canada to define competencies needed by practitioners working in child care centres, but much less on competencies specific to family child care providers. In the opinion of several key informants, the curricula developed in diverse jurisdictions reflect similar understandings (although the terminology may be different) of competencies needed in child care centres.

While most key informants saw the community college curricula as reflecting part of the knowledge base of ECCE, they felt it was inadequate. They saw a need for a more comprehensive statement of existing knowledge and the development of new areas of knowledge to more fully reflect the occupation. This would include:

- a more complete articulation of the theoretical foundations that speak to "why" something is done as well as "what" is to be done. This happens in university-level programs, but less so in community colleges.
- a better blend of theoretical and practice-based knowledge. The key informants making this comment would like to see more research into the actual experience of front-line practitioners, including family care providers and greater involvement of front-line practitioners in theory building.
- better mechanisms to incorporate new research and emerging issues into the knowledge base. Research on infant brain development and anti-bias programs was suggested.

In addition to obvious needs related to training practitioners and assessing their competence, key informants gave several reasons for more completely defining and articulating the knowledge base, including:

- developing a consistent and coherent public image for the field;
- establishing a base from which practitioners can speak confidently, not only about what they do but why they do it;
- interacting more effectively with other professionals; and
- providing an identifiable base upon which to continue building knowledge.

What people know is closely associated with their career path. In principle, there was agreement among key informants about the need for an inclusive approach to ECCE careers—that is, to defining the profession in ways that recognize different paths by which people enter and move through the field, both laterally and vertically. This model has been described as a career lattice by Bredekamp & Willer[17] and is reflected in the career structure proposed by Ferguson.[18] A career lattice recognizes the shared knowledge base across different settings, such as family child care, centre-based care, family resource centres or preschools, as well specialized knowledge that leads to increasing responsibility, such as caregiver, administrator, trainer or resource centre coordinator. Recognition of a shared knowledge base within multiple roles and settings increases opportunities for practitioner mobility and professional growth. Focusing on a common core of knowledge and skills central to the work, rather than the setting in which the skills are used, would also increase public understanding of ECCE as a profession.

A number of key informants noted that practitioners in the ECCE field tend to identify with the setting or status of their place of work more strongly than the knowledge and skills they bring to the work. They are regulated or unregulated practitioners or centre-based, family-based or resource centre-based practitioners. Key informants suggested that increasing emphasis on the skills and knowledge needed to support families and promote healthy child development could help to re-focus practitioners on what they have in common while not diminishing real differences.

> Standards of practice:
> Standards of practice are benchmarks or points of reference against which occupations and the proficiency of people in those occupations are measured or assessed.[19]

Standards are at the heart of professionalization. Processes and systems for setting standards of practice and certifying practitioners based on their ability to meet those standards are central to defining a profession.[20] Among other things, standards are used:

- to help design training programs;
- to assess candidates for certification; and
- by employees and their supervisors to appraise performance and assess training needs.[21]

Some key considerations identified in an international review of systems and processes for setting occupational standards and certification were the need for:[22]

- active participation of all stakeholders;
- all stakeholders to be talking the same language;
- consistent methodologies; and
- processes to assess equivalent qualifications.

All key informants agreed on the importance of standards of practice and most agreed that a coherent statement of standards does not exist. Two key informants, however, had reservations about developing standards of practice without a policy commitment to support their implementation. They felt that standards must be developed within a reasonable expectation that there will be resources and an infrastructure to support practitioners to realize them.

Standards of practice were seen as an essential tool in defining and promoting both quality and professionalism. They were viewed as tools which would facilitate:

- the collection of comparable baseline data to inform on-going national research on quality;
- self-evaluation among practitioners;
- shared responsibility for promoting quality among staff in a workplace;
- communication with parents and the public about quality practices;
- identification and sharing of best practices; and
- sharing of knowledge and experiences across jurisdictions.

Key informants envisaged the articulation of standards of practice at different levels with increasing degrees of specificity—from principles to measurable guidelines supported by specific tools. Their comments reflected hoped-for outcomes of the Canadian Child Care Federation's Partners in Quality project. There was general recognition that any standards of practice articulated nationally would require adaptation to local circumstances. Some key informants assumed that anything developed nationally would, therefore, be stated as principles of practice. However, others felt that it was critical to produce concrete statements and tools that would be used by front-line practitioners. Their fear about more general statements of principle was that they would generate a response from a limited number of practitioners—those who always participate in such discussions. On the other hand, they felt many practitioners would be motivated to engage in a discussion and testing of tools that reflected concrete measurable standards. Shared measurable guidelines, in the opinion of one key informant, would also facilitate the collection of compatible data at the national level, which is needed for both research and advocacy.

General comments about standards of practice included concerns about their scope and how they would be used. The existence of gaps in research, particularly research that examines day-to-day practice in real settings, was a frequent concern. Additional concerns were that standards of practice should include process indicators as well as outcome indicators; that they address standards of "caring" as well as "education;" and that they recognize the importance of supportive relationships with the family in addition to interaction between the child and the practitioner.

A final issue was that standards should be communicated and used in ways that are clearly supportive to practitioners rather than judgmental.

Whether people conceptualized standards of practice as measurable objectives or guidelines, was strong support for moving ahead with them. An articulation of standards of practice was seen not only as a mechanism to define and promote professional performance, but also as a foundation for a coherent discussion of all aspects of quality, both within the sector and with other stakeholders.

> Codes of Ethics:
> A code of ethics sets out principles of behaviour to be followed when delivering services.

A code of ethics is a tool for the accountability of a profession. It is a statement to the public as well as to professionals. It provides individual practitioners with a framework to guide them in daily decisions and a point of reference that is independent of their workplace. It helps parents or other stakeholders to define appropriate expectations. It is a reference point for resolving disputes and judging alleged unethical behaviour.

Many provincial associations have developed or adapted codes of ethics. All key informants agreed that existing codes reflect relative consensus across the sector. They saw the work already completed as easily adapted to other jurisdictions. The major challenge identified by all was integrating a code of ethics into systems of education for future and current practitioners and finding ways to support the code's active implementation. Learning to use a code of ethics was seen as much more difficult than learning about it. New practitioners can be introduced to ethical issues in their pre-service training. However, most key informants felt that experience in the field was necessary for the issues to be meaningful.

Two further issues concerning codes of ethics were raised by some key informants: the challenge of finding the resources needed for training and implementation; and the relative strength of a code of ethics as a tool for accountability without legislative recognition. There was a concern that, in a situation where compliance is voluntary there is, in the end, limited action that can be taken to confront unethical behaviour and generally few resources to monitor behaviour.

Infrastructure

In addition to articulating the knowledge, standards and principles of practice, professional infrastructure includes ensuring the necessary preparation and promoting and monitoring competent and ethical practice. The current infrastructure for early childhood practitioners varies across the country. Most provinces and territories have professional associations. Three have mechanisms for voluntary professional certification. Most jurisdictions have training programs to prepare early childhood practitioners within the community college system, although programs vary in length. Many provinces have universities that offer early childhood degree programs but none has legislation recognizing ECCE as a profession. Most jurisdictions have minimal legislative requirements related to ECCE work qualifications. Limited resources are devoted to monitoring the delivery of ECCE service across the country and they are usually restricted to health and safety issues.

This section discusses the legal and institutional mechanisms that are the infrastructure of a profession. They are the visible tools to ensure standards are set and maintained and that practitioners are held accountable.

Legislative Recognition

Being recognized in legislation provides a profession with legal authority for setting and monitoring standards in their field. Professional associations in British Columbia, Ontario and Nova Scotia have initiated processes to move towards legislative recognition. Key informants from several other jurisdictions spoke of the importance of both the symbolic and actual benefits of legislative recognition.

The primary reason for legislative recognition of professional groups is to improve public accountability.[23] It is argued that the level of expertise required to set and monitor standards requires knowledgeable practitioners to be actively involved in regulating the field. Key informants identified a number of additional benefits of legislative recognition including:

- greater public credibility and visibility for ECCE work;
- a stronger voice for practitioners interacting with a variety of stakeholders, including training institutions, other professionals, the public and governments; and
- separation of professional issues (e.g., practitioner qualifications) from infrastructure issues (e.g., facility health regulations). These are currently combined in most provincial legislation.

Most key informants supported legislative recognition in theory, but concerns were expressed about the priority it should be given now and about the feasibility of establishing a regulatory infrastructure based on membership fees and without government funding. Themes raised by key informants included:

- a need to focus on issues perceived to be of more immediate concern to front-line practitioners, such as access to training and working conditions;
- a need for more education of practitioners about the function of regulations and the role of a regulatory body;
- a need to develop processes to engage the field in setting standards, prior to legislative recognition;
- the unwillingness of governments to make changes unless there is obvious public concern and/or benefit; and
- the danger of governments downloading current responsibilities without downloading funds.

An additional concern about legislative recognition was the fact that it seemed to place practitioners in a position of accountability to two masters—an employer and a professional body.

The issue of legislative recognition recurs in other discussions of professional infrastructure in that recognition marks the difference between mandatory and voluntary compliance with various standards.

Credentialing

> Credentialing is a process that evaluates the extent to which an individual has both a core of theoretical knowledge ("the why") and practice competency ("the how to").[24]

The term "credentialing" refers both to "licensing" and "certification." A licence is official permission to engage in a form of employment that would otherwise be illegal. A certificate verifies that a person has the specific qualifications and competencies needed to practise an occupation.[25]

The traditional pattern of professional preparation begins with successful completion of a recognized academic program leading to a diploma or degree. This usually includes a period of supervised practice. Academic preparation may be followed by the profession assessing candidates against an occupational standard. Certification is a statement to the public that the individual has been successfully assessed against the standards of the profession and is currently recognized as a competent and ethical practitioner. Certification is usually administered by professional bodies. In some professions, the academic diploma is all that is needed for a certificate. In others, additional exams or supervised practice are required.

Certificates may be granted on a one-time basis or practitioners may be required to renew them after a specified time. Renewal may be contingent upon completion of continuing education programs.

Licensure, where it is required, is often linked to certification in that practitioners require a certificate in order to apply for a licence. Child care licences are usually awarded to programs rather than individuals, but the conditions for licensing may specify the minimum staff qualifications.

New occupations wishing to establish themselves as a profession are immediately faced with the following issues:
- defining the minimum standards to be recognized as a professional in the occupation; and
- assessing the qualifications of people currently in the field against those standards.

Academic Qualifications

Key informants generally agreed that a two-year program was a minimum academic standard for early childhood professionals. The need for at least two years was confirmed in a recent British Columbia study of occupational competencies, which recommended that training for early childhood professionals be increased from 10 months to two and possibly three years in that province.

The prerequisite academic preparation for many professions is defined provincially and, for most professions, the length of academic preparation is similar from province to province. This makes interprovincial comparison of programs relatively easy and facilitates mobility of practitioners. Such comparability does not exist in ECCE. Currently, pre-service diploma-level training programs for early childhood practitioners in Canada range from 40 hours to two years.

Child care regulations related to training requirements vary significantly across jurisdictions and across different settings within jurisdictions. Some jurisdictions do not require a centre to have staff with formal training in order to obtain a licence. Most provinces and territories require licensed centres to have a certain percentage or number of staff with a recognized diploma. Often the director of a centre is required to have a diploma and a specified number of years experience. In all jurisdictions, licensed family child care has fewer requirements related to staff qualifications than centre-based care and for unlicensed family child care there are no required staff training prerequisites. In centre-based and family child care settings, there are practitioners with certificates, diplomas or degrees in positions where these qualifications are not required.

Drawing the line at which a practitioner is recognized as a "professional" is a sensitive issue in an occupation where many practitioners want to develop a more inclusive paradigm for professionalism. There is a concern that certification standards should not systematically exclude individuals whose access to higher education may be limited on the one hand, but a desire to ensure high levels of competence on the other.[26] Bredekamp & Willer identify the following challenges related to training and education:[27]

- balancing open access to the field with expectations of an ongoing commitment to professional development; and
- promoting access to ongoing professional development and building mechanisms that link demonstrated knowledge and competency to recognized credentials or formal programs of study.

Making post-secondary education more accessible and linking professional development to recognized credentials are strategies for a more inclusive and open system. Although key informants did not specifically address this issue, several did speak of a need to integrate continuing education programs into a coherent training package that would allow practitioners to work towards a recognized diploma, degree or specialized certificate over time. In a vision for a quality ECCE system, Kagan and Cohen describe a desired goal for the year 2010: all training and education are linked to credit and articulation agreements exist for the transfer of credits among institutions.[28]

Professions and professionals are characterized by high levels of skill and knowledge. Over a period of time, the competence of practitioners is correlated with the credibility of their academic preparation. Several key informants were concerned about the negative effects of financial cutbacks on the quality of community college programs. These included:

- pressure on college staff to admit and keep students who are not personally suited to be early childhood practitioners;
- a shift to a more generic curriculum with less time for instruction specific to ECCE work;
- less time for instructors to supervise student field placements; and
- the difficulty institutions have in making changes to the curricula to keep up with emerging trends in research and practice.

They expressed concern that, among other things, poor educational preparation leaves individuals inadequately prepared and, over time, could reduce the public credibility of trained practitioners. Some key informants argued that a stronger voice for practitioners is needed to put pressure on college administrators to ensure appropriate curricula and policies. Recognition as a profession would help to strengthen this call.

A final issue related to training programs mentioned by at least one key informant was the need to balance theory and practice in the curriculum. This issue went beyond the time students have for a practicum to a need for more communication between instructors and practitioners about what happens when theories are translated into day-to-day practice.

Practicum

Supervised practice complements the academic preparation of many professionals, either during or after academic study. ECCE practitioners need skills to observe and influence the behaviour of the children. They try to promote the development of individual children by guiding their interaction with the environment, other children and the child care practitioner. Supporting children's healthy development involves making judgments about specific situations many times a day. Most key informants commented on the importance of a period of supervised experience for new practitioners. They stressed the need to integrate the academic knowledge base with the realities of practice and the desirability of assisting practitioners to develop self-reflection skills in their work. Most key informants would like to see a longer period of supervised practice, but feared that the opposite was happening as a result of funding cutbacks in training institutions.

Theoretically, students have opportunities for feedback and reflection with supervisors once they start work. In practice, there is seldom time and not all supervisors are equally skilled in mentoring and coaching, according to several key informants.

Continuing Competence

Professionalism presumes continuing competence. In some professions, practitioners must renew their certification periodically and renewal is conditional on participation in professional development activities. Knowledge is constantly changing, individuals develop bad habits, practitioners need the stimulation of new people and new ideas and two years of initial training can only touch the surface of many areas. These were all reasons given by key informants in support of professional development. Professional development takes many forms: workshops, conferences, networking, mentoring and structured opportunities to reflect on practice. The possibility of using modern technologies opens up a number of new avenues.

Although key informants stressed the importance of professional development, their picture of what is happening suggested participation is far from universal. Key informants from different communities commented on the level of apathy in the field and the difficulty of engaging practitioners in professional development activities. It was not evident to them why this was so. Less support from employers for professional development was one explanation, but several people felt this was not the only issue. The absence of suitable training opportunities is a key issue for family child care providers. Where training is available, a lack of financial support is a barrier, since family child care practitioners generally pay the cost of training themselves and may also lose a day's wages to pay an alternate caregiver while they participate.

In some professions certification renewal and/or increased remuneration are tied to participation in a certain number of hours of professional development. Neither recertification nor financial incentives applies to most ECCE practitioners. Nor is there always support in the workplace. Some employers cut professional development budgets early in the process of balancing a budget. However, others continue to encourage and support practitioners with limited resources. Generally, there are few extrinsic rewards for ECCE practitioners who participate in professional development activities. Salaries do not increase. Parents are unlikely to know and appreciate the fact that practitioners gave up their weekends or evenings to improve their skills. VanderVen argues that, while extrinsic motivators are important, professional development should also promote intrinsic motivation—curiosity and desire to learn and develop new skills.[29]

Willer & Bredekamp argue that professional preparation and professional development should be linked to a career structure that offers opportunities for growth in multiple roles and settings. Lateral (to different roles requiring a similar level of knowledge and skill) movements should be encouraged as well as vertical (requiring more specialized knowledge).[30] At the moment, most practitioners see career paths as limited; change often means moving further away from work with children. If the profession was conceptualized broadly to include all those whose primary work is the care and education of young children and support for their families, more career options could be defined and professional development could be linked to enhancing an individual's opportunity for different areas of professional employment.

Accountability

The relationship of recognized professions to the public is changing. People are demanding more accountability and openness to public input into what were once exclusively professional domains. Compared to other human services, the checks and balances of accountability for child care practitioners is limited. Licensed care sites are currently regulated by provincial governments and monitoring often focuses primarily on health and safety issues.

One argument for legislative recognition of ECCE as a profession is that the authority it gives to the profession for self-regulation is essential to move to a higher level of accountability. With voluntary compliance, professional associations have neither the resources nor the mandate to monitor ethical and competent practice in the field. With inadequate standards and limited monitoring, poor quality child care is more likely to persist. This is harmful to children. It also becomes a part of the public image of what early childhood practitioners do and the field as a whole is held less accountable. With legal authority, professional organizations could use both a "carrot" (training, support, resources) and a "stick" (refusal to certify) to encourage higher standards in the field.

Key informants who saw legislative recognition as a low priority also argued for improving accountability and increasing quality. However, they said it was more important to use available resources to make training and professional development widely accessible to all practitioners and working towards widespread upgrading to increase quality practice across the sector.

Demand for quality is another dimension of accountability. When parents recognize quality care, associate it with trained staff and are willing to pay more for better care, there will be more incentive for practitioners to increase their competence. Workshops with Canadian Union of Postal Workers members in one community were successful in helping parents to become advocates for quality care for their children by helping them to identify specific factors contributing to quality care.

Institutions

Professions require an institutional base to support their members and be an official voice of the profession with respect to policies and practices. Occupations that have legislated recognition may have two professional institutions:

- an association whose primary purpose is providing services and support to the members; and

- a college, whose primary purpose is regulatory—ensuring practitioners are certified to practise, maintaining a registry of certified professionals and managing a process to ensure public accountability.

Key informants discussed the related roles of professional associations and professional colleges in supporting a profession. The latter do not exist at this time, but would be created if legislation were passed to recognize the field as a profession. The need to separate regulatory and support functions was generally agreed. However, several key informants were dubious that two organizations could be supported by the same membership base. They saw the creation of a college leading to the demise or significant restructuring of a provincial professional association.

In the absence of legislative recognition, membership in provincial/territorial associations is voluntary. The associations depend on memberships fees and projects or other forms of revenue to fund their activities. Membership rates and organizational structures vary across jurisdictions. Associations that are actively working towards legislative recognition have examined the financial implications and see it as feasible to assume the necessary responsibilities. Their colleagues are less optimistic.

Reflections

The following reflections are those of the author based mainly on the key informant interviews. They are divided into challenges and opportunities and are offered, not as conclusions, but as thoughts to promote further dialogue.

Challenges

Professionalization

Professionalization is the process of becoming a profession. Technically, the steps in this process are relatively clear: define the occupation; set standards related to knowledge, skills and practice; and establish an infrastructure to support practitioners and ensure that the standards are understood, supported, used and updated. The Canadian Child Care Federation's Partners in Quality project, through its research into standards, mechanisms for recognizing competence and options for infrastructure, is contributing considerable technical information to the dialogue on professionalization. However, engaging people in a process to work with this information is not a "technical" issue. If the link between professionalization and better working conditions were ensured, this would be extrinsically motivating. However, the current political climate does not promote the expectation of higher levels of government support. Strategies to engage practitioners in this process, at least initially, will have to appeal to intrinsic motivation—the incentive to learn, curiosity and the desire to belong.[31] A better understanding of the roots of the apathy identified by several key informants could lead to a better understanding of how to appeal to intrinsic motivation.

Winning the Public

Ferguson links the invisibility of child care in our society to the invisibility of what is perceived as women's work.[32] Professionalization is one strategy for greater visibility. However, public support is important in pursuing professionalization. Each helps to support the other.

ECCE practitioners want and need public support for several reasons:

- the credibility of any field is grounded in widespread recognition of its expertise and the perceived importance of that expertise to the well-being of society;
- politicians are more likely to consider legislated recognition if they perceive public support; and
- the public pays for ECCE directly through fees and indirectly through taxes.

Public perceptions and understanding of the occupation are an important context for the discussion of professionalization. The ECCE field faces the the devaluing and invisibility of women's work, which have been well documented for other female-dominated professions, such as nursing, social work and teaching. An additional challenge is the strong perception of child care as an extension of mothering. Practitioners want to have their expertise recognized as supportive to, but different from parenting.[33] However, strategies to professionalize will need to proceed concurrently with strategies to promote a sympathetic public understanding of the occupation. VanderVen refers to the need for practitioners to develop a marketing mentality and become more proactive in talking about and promoting their worth.[34] One key informant suggested that there is a need to use marketing techniques to reposition public perceptions of ECCE as a social service for working parents to a preventive social force for healthy child development.

Legislative Recognition

Most key informants saw advantages to granting qualified practitioners legislative recognition and greater regulatory powers. However, few saw this as a primary focus at this point. Rather than opposition to the idea, key informants wondered when and under what conditions it should become a priority. Several key informants saw a need for more work to build a professional infrastructure in preparation for legislative recognition. Others simply saw other issues, such as training and improving the overall quality of the workforce as a better use of limited resources. Some questioned the feasibility of pursuing legislative recognition with current governments and saw a need to focus on things that would not simply lead to frustration.

Inclusiveness

There was general agreement among key informants that the child, not the setting, is central to defining the field. In theory, this leads to an inclusive approach to defining the field and its entry points and career paths. However, in practice there are divisions in the field that are not easily bridged by inclusive language alone. The divisions most evident in the key informant interviews were those between practitioners in centre-based and family child care. Working to develop mutual understanding and a culture of inclusiveness that is respectful of the real differences between these groups will be a challenge in building a comprehensive professional framework that accommodates practitioners from all settings.

Opportunities

The following comments are based on areas in which there appeared to be some agreement among key informants:

- the importance of standards as tools for dialogue and practice;
- the need for more comprehensive and coherent research related to day-to-day practice; and
- the centrality of appropriate training to both quality and professionalism.

Standards

All key informants were interested in a better articulation of standards of practice. They saw the standards as important tools both to improve practitioners' performance and enhance the quality of children's experiences. Standards would provide some benchmarks for professionalism in the field.

The work of the Canadian Child Care Federation's Partners in Quality project is seen as an opportunity for productive and creative processes and communication around standards of practice. While expectations of key informants varied with respect to the precise outcomes of the project, most saw it as a significant step in building a shared understanding of quality practice, which in turn would contribute to a better understanding of professionalism. The challenge for those involved with the project and other leaders will be to ensure that this opportunity is framed as supportive and developed in a way that is meaningful to front-line practitioners.

Research

Gaps in research related to knowledge of day-to-day practice was mentioned by several key informants. Identifying these gaps more clearly and looking at strategies for partnering practitioners with researchers to pursuing specific questions in the field could meet a number of needs and also tap into the intrinsic motivation of some practitioners.

Training

Education and training, including professional development, are at the core of both quality and professionalism. Key informants identified numerous issues of concern related to training: financial barriers to access; appropriateness of training to the needs of practitioners; lack of interest among practitioners in professional development; and problems associated with cutbacks in funding to training institutions. The articulation of standards of practice provides an opportunity to revisit education and training programs and see them through a new lens. It is an opportunity to examine the coherence of various opportunities for education and professional development in terms of their relationship to recognized credentials. It is an opportunity to examine the sequencing and balance of opportunities for academic studies, supervised practica and reflective learning based in experience.

National Support

A majority of key informants saw a positive role for a strong national infrastructure that would:

- act as a focal point for dialogue among provincial/territorial partners and for national research and data collection;
- support the development and dissemination of resources that can be adapted for use locally; and
- continue to promote involvement of the federal government. This helps sustain the profile of ECCE, is a source of resources in the system and can be used for leverage at the provincial level.

A few key informants saw voluntary certification at the national level as a goal in the future, but most did not see this as likely. They hoped that effective mechanisms for transferring credentials among jurisdictions would emerge over time, but their immediate priorities related to building within their own jurisdiction and with as much collaboration and support across jurisdictions as possible.

Conclusion

Professionalism is embodied in the competent and ethical practice of individuals who are supported by institutions and environments that encourage quality practice. Professionalization is movement towards establishing institutional support for professionalism. Institutions are the collective voice of the profession, through which professionals articulate a coherent understanding of the field and develop and monitor standards and ethics of practice.

Key informants and the literature suggest that professionalism is important to many practitioners in the field of ECCE and they relate it closely to quality. The commitment to a common path to professionalization is less clear. Perhaps a focus on quality defined in terms of promoting the healthy development of young children may help to weave the numerous threads of professionalism into the recognizable cloth of an ECCE profession.

Endnotes

1. VanderVen, 1994, p. 79; Mitchell, 1995, p. 3.
2. Connections, 1996, p. 1; key informant interviews.
3. Fromberg, 1997, p. 190.
4. Ferguson, 1995.
5. Bredekamp & Willer, 1993.
6. Bredekamp & Willer, 1993, p. 83; Connections, 1996.
7. Employment and Immigration Canada, 1993a, p. 10.
8. Mitchell, p.1.
9. Ferguson, 1995; Beach & Bertrand, 1997.
10. Beach & Bertrand, 1997.
11. Employment and Immigration Canada, 1993a, p. 11.
12. Employment and Immigration Canada, 1993c, p. 11.
13. Ibid., p. 4.
14. VanderVen, 1994, P. 79.
15. Bredekamp & Willer, 1992, p. 48.
16. Employment and Immigration Canada, 1993a, p. 12.
17. Bredekamp & Willer, 1992.
18. Ferguson, 1995, p. 15.
19. Employment and Immigration Canada, 1993c, p. 3.
20. Ibid., p.3.
21. Ibid., p.3.
22. Ibid., p.2.
23. Employment and Immigration Canada, 1993a.
24. Doherty, 1997b, p.1.
25. Ibid., p.1.
26. Bredekamp and Willer, 1993, p. 83.
27. Ibid., p. 94.
28. Kagan and Cohen, 1996, p. 318.
29. VanderVen, 1994, P. 63.
30. Willer and Bredekamp, 1993.
31. Vander Ven, 1994; personal communication with key informants.
32. Ferguson, 1995, p. 7.
33. Bredekamp and Willer, 1993, p. 84.
34. VanderVen, 1994, p. 84.

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Appendix A

Key Informants

The opinions expressed by the key informants were personal and did not necessarily reflect the opinions of their employer.

Joyce Branscombe
Executive Director
Early Childhood Educators of B.C.
Vancouver, British Columbia

Jane Beach
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Child Care Sector Study
Victoria, British Columbia

Jane Bertrand
Consultant, Study Team
Child Care Sector Study
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Barbara Elliott
Early Childhood Specialist
Thunder Bay, Ontario

Heather Exley
Communites Together for Children
Thunder Bay, Ontario

Elaine Ferguson
Child Care Connection-NS
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Karen Fogelen
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Carol Gott
South East Grey Community Outreach
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Jane Hewes
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Grant McEwen College
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Jamie Kass
Canadian Union of Postal Workers
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Cathy McCormack
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Department of Health and Social Services
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Ann McIvor
Metro Children's Services
Toronto, Ontario

Carole Page-Heyding
Early Childhood Education, Sheridan College
Brampton, Ontario

Marie Rosset
Manitoba Child Care Association
Winnipeg, Manitoba

Appendix B

Interview Framework

Introduction:

A central defining characteristic of groups recognized as "professionals" is the power their members have related to self-regulation. This power is usually conferred through some form of statute or regulation that is accepted by practitioners, employers and the public.

The mechanisms for defining and implementing self-regulation include:

a) defining the field: a core base of knowledge, code of ethics, standards of practice, relationships with related areas of practice and among practitioners within the profession.

b) establishing processes for: setting and maintaining standards, training and development, awarding official recognition, ensuring continuing training and development.

c) ensuring institutions and resources exist to carry out these processes: e.g. colleges, professional associations, accreditation boards, etc.

I would like to explore your understanding/position related to each of these aspects of professionalization both with respect to the current status of child care and early childhood education and possible future directions.

Questions:

1. Since the context of this research is the issue of quality in this field, could we begin with any general comments you would like to make about the role of professionalism in relation to quality of services?

2. Defining the field: A profession needs to be able to identify itself. Please comment on each of the following areas both with respect to the current status and possible future directions.

DEFINING THE FIELD		
Issue	**Current Status**	**Future Directions**
Core base of knowledge		
Code of ethics		
Standards of practice		
Relationships with related fields/ within field		
Other		

3. Establishing processes: In the following questions, please try to separate the processes from the institutions that would formalize those processes by thinking about: Who should be involved? In what way? What are the challenges? How might those challenges be addressed?

ESTABLISHING PROCESSES				
	Who	**How**	**Challenges**	**Ideas**
Setting standards for: • entry into field • ethical behaviour • ongoing competence • other issues				
Training and development: • curriculum content • standards of training				
Official recognition as professional				
Ensuring opportunities for continuing training and development				
Other				

4. Institutions and resources: What legal and/or institutional framework should be established to take responsibility for defining the field and ensuring the processes needed? What are the strengths and weaknesses of different options in terms of their feasibility? Support from various stakeholders? Capacity to get the job done efficiently and effectively? Contribution to improving the quality of service?

INSTITUTIONS AND RESOURCES					
Institution/Role	**Feasibility**	**Support**	**Efficiency/ Effectiveness**	**Quality**	**Other comments**
Professional Association • code of ethics • practice standards • recognition					
Other					

Professionalism in a Post-Modern Era

Thoughts on Early Childhood Education

by Alan R. Pence

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Abstract

This paper was written to accompany the "Professionalism and Quality" paper by Marilynn Kuhn. It is intended to provide a broader context for the early childhood education community's discussion of professionalism and professionalization. Issues of quality care and professionalism are "problematized" from a post-modernist lens, based on the author's work with Peter Moss and Gunilla Dahlberg. For a greater elaboration of these ideas, readers are referred to Valuing Quality in Early Childhood Services: New Approaches to Defining Quality *(Moss & Pence, eds.) and* Beyond Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care: Postmodern Perspectives *(Dahlberg, Moss & Pence), referenced at the end of this paper.*

Introduction

> A society with clearly defined ideas of how to measure art will be regarded as authoritarian and narrow minded: true quality [in child care], like true art, cannot be reduced to simple statements. —Jensen[1]

> [We are at] a fundamental turning point in social thought, an epochal shift... marked by thinking differently about the meaning of knowledge. We seem somewhere in the midst of a shift away from the concept of a found world, "out there," objective, knowable, factual, toward a concept of constructed worlds.–Lather[2]

> During the past two decades, studying the boundaries between developmental theory, early childhood education and child care practice, I have become increasingly convinced that much of what counts as knowledge and expertise about children is deeply problematic, right down to such a fundamental idea as "early childhood development program." —Woodhead[3]

An alternative title for this paper was "Striving for Certainty in Uncertain Times," which captures the essential tension in any quest for "quality assurance" in the closing years of the 20th century. Many would agree that quality is not definable and assurance is not achievable. Why, then, is the Canadian Child Care Federation's Partners in Quality project engaged in an activity called "quality assurance" when we cannot be assured of quality? From my perspective, it is because there is much we can learn by working through this apparent paradox. Through engaging this tension, early childhood professionals can explore where we are, how we came to be here and where we might head in working to promote the well-being of children.

As Lather noted above, we are in the midst of an epochal shift "marked by thinking differently about the meaning of knowledge." Early childhood education and early childhood professionals are not immune from the dramatic changes in understandings that are taking place in the world around us. Although our arrival at this place postdates some other disciplines and professions, we must engage in our own reconceptualization of the implications of post-modernist thought on our professional activities.

Early childhood education, care and development are approaching the crossroads of modernist and post-modernist thought. While post-modernism is not the only route through which a reconceptualization can be attempted (feminism and multiculturalism being two others), Cahoone[4] points out that these three have overlapping tendencies in that each requires us to problematize that which we have taken for granted, to look beneath the surface and attempt to understand the construction upon which a given "reality" is erected.

Professionalism is one such construction. Professionalism as we normally understand it is a modernist construction based on an assumption of a "world 'out there,' objective, knowable, factual."[5] Professionals, in this construction, are those who, through education, certification, peer recognition and related activities, have earned the right to represent this knowledge. And while there are many who support this "normal" understanding of professionalism, a growing number of others challenge it from a variety of philosophical and ideological bases. Some of these perspectives are considered below.

"Normal" Professionalism and Its Critics

Critics of professionalism range from those who identify certain elements of normal professionalism as problematic but largely redeemable, to those who see professionalism as the source of much that is problematic in modern society. Examples of the former can be found in several of Kuhn's interviews of Canadian early childhood education professionals: "Practitioners want their expertise recognized, but reject other attributes linked to being an expert"[6] and "Being an expert is associated with impersonal expert-client relationships."[7] Examples of the latter include Ivan Illich's critique of medical services as being themselves disease producing[8] and Ivan Berg's description of education as the "great training robbery" in which "workers with more or less formal education exhibit no significant difference in work performance."[9] Latter-day critiques of an Illich and Berg nature can be found in John McKnight's *The Careless Society: Community and Its Counterfeits*, the cover of which says that "the experts' best efforts to rebuild and revitalize communities are in fact destroying them."[10]

If Illich, Berg and McKnight frame the far left side of a continuum of perspectives on the merits and demerits of professionalism, the classical sociological perspectives of Comte and Durkheim can be said to frame the right side. Over a century old, their writings still carry great currency in contemporary society:

> ...service professionals manifest a special sensitivity towards clients (art of caring), as well as practical techniques in managing their life problems (science of caring). This unique blend of art and science distinguishes professions as philanthropic sciences.[11]

If Comte and Durkheim on one side and Illich, Berg and McKnight on the other are used as end points to suspend an elastic band representing a range of opinions regarding the benefits and desired characteristics of professionalism in the human services, one can observe that there is a dynamic tension along the continuum and views on professionalism are spread along that continuum.

Within the field of early childhood education, there is a greater concentration of opinion toward the "pro-professionalism" or "classical" right-hand side. This positioning of the field emerges from the interviews undertaken by Kuhn and in a forum hosted by the Canadian Child Care Federation where one participant noted: "Can't we just first get ourselves established as legitimate professionals before we have this discussion of if we should or should not be professionals?"

To Be or What to Be

Most of us who identify ourselves as early childhood professionals can appreciate this sentiment. We have worked so hard for the limited gains we have made to date; can we really support a change in goalposts now?

A somewhat different position is taken by Kelly, who argues that in order to professionalize, "we must begin with criteria accepted for professional recognitions."[12] She notes that professions have the following characteristics:

- formal education;
- an organized body of knowledge with theoretical underpinnings and minimum competencies;

- research activity;
- a code of ethics regulating the profession;
- a professional culture or association supporting a long term commitment to the occupation;
- autonomy and self regulation; and
- a clientele that recognizes the authority and integrity of the profession.[13]

This list is familiar to many in early childhood education and consistent with Kuhn's literature review.

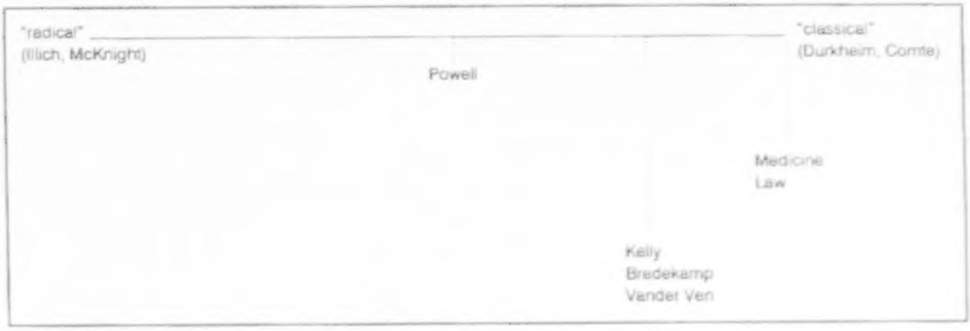
Powell, a respected leader in early childhood education and child development, has argued that "the conventional model of professionalism is of limited use to the child care field due to problems in generating a widely recognized technical data base for child care practices and inherent conflicts in maintaining close relations with parent-clients"[14] and that the field "needs to modify the conventional paradigm."

On the continuum of professionalism, Kelly's position, as well as that of Bredekamp & Willer,[15] Vander Ven[16] and most other early childhood education commentators, can be seen as well toward the right side of the continuum but typically not as far right as many established professions such as medicine or law. On this continuum, Powell's comments would be further to the left, but still within an "accepted" range of dissent.

Much of the left side of the continuum is missing in Figure 1. It would be a mistake to believe that the range of the early childhood education debate extends only from Comte to Powell's critique. Intimations of a broader critique and an extended continuum emerge in some comments of those interviewed by Kuhn. Concerns about the negative attributes of an expert culture and the need for a dialogue among stakeholders regarding quality are representative of the "alternative" literature relevant to early childhood education in Canada.

FIGURE 1

A CONTINUUM OF PROFESSIONALISM



Thinking on the Left Side

My own introduction to the left side came through participation as a Canadian representative to a largely European-based child sociology project, *Childhood as a Social Phenomenon (*1987 to 1992) and through an invitation to work cooperatively with a northern Canadian tribal council to develop an early childhood education training curriculum (1988 to present). Both projects helped me to explore and problematize many assumptions regarding children and their care. Each provided a different perspective on an early childhood landscape that had become, perhaps, too familiar and thereby invisible.

The perspective that the European-based project provided was that of the child's. As I reviewed the North American early childhood literature, I was disturbed by how seldom we hear the voice of the child in our published work but pleased to discover a Nordic study of children, the Basun Project, which more truly saw and heard children through their own eyes and voices.[16] Working with First Nations peoples on early childhood education curriculum was equally revealing of the absence of culture in our North American universalist projections of appropriate development and best practice.

Working on these two projects revealed that the early childhood education professionalism knowledge base was far too narrow to support the breadth of the field and the families it purports to serve. Further, the tenets of professionalism (such as those identified by Kelly) did not allow for *processes* to address those limitations, such as the legitimacy of hearing the voices of the children, families and communities served. In short, both the products of early childhood education professionalism (the extant knowledge base) and the processes (dialogue, engagement, sharing) were inadequate to the task of creating *contextually* meaningful and supportive approaches to quality child care.

Peter Moss, coordinator of the European Union's Child Care Commission from 1986 to 1996, arrived at a similar point of concern in his work. In 1992, we commenced work on an edited volume that would address the need for *inclusionary* processes that hear the voices of a wide range of stakeholders in defining and developing quality care.

The inclusionary approach advocated in our 1994 publication[19] is fundamentally at odds with the classic construction of professionalism found in medicine and law and described in Kelly's review. In those constructions of professionalism, knowledge is treated as a commodity that is held and produced by a few (the professional group). In the classic construction, knowledge is used to serve the needs of those who do not have that special knowledge (Comte) or ensure power and privilege for the controlling group (Illich). Our approach questioned the "unique commodity" approach (as it is questioned by Powell) and redefined the role of the professional as that of a process and product specialist. The process approach emphasizes the importance of bringing many points of view—parents, children, community and professionals—into the creation of situation-specific and unique understanding that is particularly relevant to the immediate context of care and development. The essence of this approach is that there is no single best practice; rather many good ways. In practice, it means that early childhood education professionals must learn to share power.

This approach was born out of our experiences in working across cultures and was consistent with a rapidly developing post-modernist critique of a long-standing modernist agenda in the social sciences. As we shift away from seeking and enforcing "universal truths" to appreciating the diversity and appropriateness of contextualized understandings, the foundation of professionalism, as we have understood it, crumbles. The future of professionalism in early childhood education and all other helping professions lies in seeking new understandings of how professionalism could evolve in the future. To this end, a few other writings from the left side are described below.

Developmentally-Appropriate Practice and the Reconceptualists

In the United States, a small counter-movement to the hegemonic portrayal of professionalism put forward by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) began to develop in the early 1990s. This "reconceptualist group" was precipitated largely by the NAEYC's publication of the universalistically-oriented *Developmentally Appropriate Practice*,[20] known as DAP. Of particular concern to many of the reconceptualists was the perspective that "DAP is for all children."[21]

Through a series of conferences and publications,[22] the American reconceptionalist group has questioned many of the fundamental tenets of early childhood education professionalism. One such tenet is child development theory. Kessen questioned the universal dimensions of Western science in his 1979 article, entitled: The American Child and Other Cultural Inventions. Kessen noted:

> The child is essentially and eternally a cultural invention and the variety of the child's definition is not the removable error of an incomplete science.[23]

Focusing on early childhood teacher education, Lubeck, a member of the reconceptualist group, noted:

> ...teacher preparation, like education generally, involves learning to think critically and to interrogate the assumptions that underlie any and all knowledge claims.... It is by becoming "reflective practitioners" (Schon, 1983; Bowman, 1989) that teachers learn to tailor their practice to the diverse needs of children in a pluralistic society.[24]

Robert Chambers and Development

In reviewing a relatively broad range of literature for the 1999 book with Moss and Dahlberg, I came across the work of Third World development specialist Robert Chambers. In his 1994 publication, *Challenging the Professions*, Chambers noted:

> We, who call ourselves professionals, are much of the problem and to do better requires reversals of much that we regard as normal. The challenge is to upend our thinking, to turn values on their heads, to invent and adopt new methods and to behave differently.[25]

Chambers provides many examples of how the good intentions of the "best and brightest" have failed to yield the results desired and anticipated. Indeed some, such as Majid Rahnema, suggest that the world would have been far worse off if the optimistic outcomes had been met. Many Western ways are not supportable, even when practised by a minority of the global population.[26]

As Western early childhood organizations and institutions begin sharing their "expertise" with developing countries (e.g. High Scope's global distribution activities), perhaps we should reflect on Chambers' experience and the destruction brought about by our best intentions. In both Canada and the United States, we need look no further than the Aboriginal communities within our borders to see what "helping others" has done.

Chambers does not condemn; rather he challenges professionals to do better by doing differently. While his terminology and references are not post-modernist, the ideas are complementary. He shares with others on the "left side" a belief that learned prescription is not the answer: "Development is not by blueprint but by a flexible and adaptive learning process."[27] And he does not underestimate the challenge in changing "normal" professionalism:

> Normal professionalism means the thinking, concepts, values and methods dominant in a profession. It is usually conservative, heavily defended and reproduced through teaching, training, text books, professional rewards and professional meetings.[28]

Conclusion

It is these professional rewards, processes and products that constitute the building blocks of professionalism found on the "right side," which we have laboured so long to achieve. The comment by the participant at the child care forum echoes through my mind. Where will we be if we give it all up now? But perhaps there is a more important question: Where will we be if we do not?

Endnotes

1. Jensen, 1994, p. 158
2. Lather, 1991, p.86.
3. Woodhead, 1996, p. 8)
4. Cahoone, 1996, p.2.
5. Lather, 1991, p.86.
6. Kuhn, p. 67.
7. Ibid, p. 67
8. Illich, 1976.
9. Rossides, 1998, p. 68.
10. McKnight, 1995.
11. Benoit, 1994, p. 304.
12. Kelly, 1990.
13. bid, pp. 167-168.
14. Powell, 1990, p. 177.
15. Bredekamp & Willer, 1992.
16. Vander Ven, 1994.
17. Pence, 1992; Pence, 1999.
18. Dencik, 1989; Langsted, 1994.
19. Moss & Pence, 1994.
20. Bredekamp, 1987.
21. Bredekamp & Rosegrant, 1992, p. 5.
22. Hatch, 1995; Kessler & Swadener, 1992; Mallory & New, 1994; Swadener & Lubeck, 1995; Goffin, 1996.
23. Kessen, 1979, p. 815.
24. Lubeck, 1996, p. 149.
25. Chambers, 1994, p. 1.
26. Rahenema, 1997, p. 378.
27. Chambers, 1994, p. 1.
28. Ibid, p. 62.

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Mobility of Early Childhood Care and Education Credits and Credentials in Canada

by Jane Beach and Jane Bertrand

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Abstract

This paper examines the transferability, articulation and portability of early childhood care and education (ECCE) post-secondary education credentials and credits within and among the provinces and territories. The paper was prepared for the Program of Research on the quality of professional education for the early childhood workforce in Canada, which is a joint initiative by the Association of Canadian Community Colleges and the Canadian Child Care Federation. The initiative is funded by the Child Care Visions program of Human Resources Development Canada and guided by a national steering committee.

The report is organized into four sections:
- *the Canadian context of post-secondary education and provincial ECCE credentials;*
- *ECCE credit and credential mobility issues: transferability, articulation and portability;*
- *innovative practices of three post-secondary institutions to support credit mobility; and*
- *conclusions and recommendations to increase ECCE credit and credential mobility.*

Introduction

The Association of Canadian Community Colleges and the Canadian Child Care Federation are conducting a two-year Program of Research on the quality of professional education for the early childhood workforce in Canada. The initiative is funded by the Child Care Visions program of Human Resources Development Canada and guided by a national steering committee. This paper describes a research project to examine the transferability, articulation and portability of ECCE post-secondary education credentials and credits within and among the provinces and territories. Possible strategies to increase ECCE credit and credential mobility are identified.

The paper contains four sections:
- the Canadian context of post-secondary education and provincial ECCE credentials;
- ECCE credit and credential mobility issues: transferability, articulation and portability;
- innovative practices at three post-secondary institutions to support credit mobility; and
- conclusions and recommendations.

Detailed information about provincial/territorial procedures for determining credential equivalency, ECCE post-secondary programs and their transfer of credit arrangements and ECCE degree programs offered at Canadian universities can be found in the Training Connections section of on the Child & Family Canada web site (www.cfc-efc.ca).

The Canadian Context

In Canada, post-secondary education and early childhood care and education services are provincial/territorial jurisdictions. Each province and territory has its own system to operate colleges and universities and ECCE education programs. Program definitions, requirements and availability vary across jurisdictions and within each, college and university programs are established as separate systems and post-secondary institutions have varying degrees of autonomy. Each jurisdiction sets the definitions of and requirements for regulated ECCE programs. Early childhood programs that are not regulated often employ individuals with ECCE credentials (e.g., early childhood intervention services, early childhood services in family resource programs, preschool programs and nursery schools in Saskatchewan and Quebec, family child care and home-based child care).

Post-Secondary Education in Canada

Post-secondary education is provided by 88 universities and over 200 community colleges.[1] Provincial/territorial jurisdictions establish program guidelines and approval procedures. Post-secondary education includes academic programs after high school, technical education and applied arts and sciences but does not usually include trade and vocational training programs which do not require high school completion.[2]

Universities typically offer undergraduate and graduate degree programs and may also offer specific professional education certificates or diplomas. In Canada, most universities are publicly funded and provincial charters establish their authority to grant degrees and other credentials and to operate as autonomous institutions.

Provincial/territorial community college systems offer more career-oriented education and training than universities. The specific function, organization and designation of community colleges varies between jurisdictions. Designations range from "colleges of applied arts and technology in Ontario; colleges of general and vocational education in Quebec;

technical/vocational and university-oriented colleges in British Columbia, Alberta and Yukon; and colleges providing specialized training in areas like agriculture, the arts, marine technology and paramedical technology."[3] Colleges usually offer certificate and diploma programs but some offer university transfer courses and others are recognized as college-universities with the authority to grant degrees. Publicly-funded colleges are most often governed by a government-appointed or elected board of governors. These institutions have less operational autonomy than universities.[4]

Private institutions are either non-profit or proprietary organizations that do not receive public operating funds. They offer a range of post-secondary academic, career education and training programs and are subject to specific provincial and territorial requirements.

Post-secondary programs at colleges and universities usually require a specific educational qualification (or its equivalent) as a condition of eligibility for admission. For instance, most post-secondary certificate, diploma and degree programs require high school completion; most graduate degree programs require the completion of a related undergraduate degree. At the college level, there is greater emphasis on open access and admission criteria are more flexible.[5]

Across Canada, recent reports by education ministries or departments, commissions, provincial/territorial and national associations and post-secondary institutions identify common issues related to credit mobility.[6] Overall, the main issues are: increased accountability, restructuring, increased transfer of credits and the recognition of previous learning acquired outside of formal education.

In response to calls for greater public sector accountability, provinces, territories and post-secondary education institutions are working to measure the effectiveness of programs in meeting student and labour market needs.

A reduction in public spending on publicly-funded institutions necessitated a restructuring of post-secondary education institutions to deliver programs at a reduced cost or with additional non-public resources, including increased student tuition fees. There is also growing attention to programs delivered by private institutions operating without direct public funding.

Closely related to the restructuring of post-secondary education systems is the trend towards increasing the transfer of credits. Post-secondary education institutions are under pressure to provide credits that can be transferred and combined with those from other institutions. This increases access for students and reduces costly duplication. Credits can be transferred within college and university systems and between the two systems. The development of articulation paths between college and university programs is also in demand.

Increased recognition of previous learning and opportunities to apply previously acquired knowledge to education credits are also related to restructuring. This is commonly known as Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR). There is province-wide implementation of PLAR at the college level in Alberta, Ontario, British Columbia, Quebec, New Brunswick and Newfoundland and pilot tests are underway in Manitoba. There is less PLAR activity in universities but interest is growing in Ontario, British Columbia, Newfoundland and the Northwest Territories.[7]

Federal government involvement in post-secondary education includes funding, coordination among governments, student assistance programs, minority official language education and research. The federal government also supports human resource mobility in different sectors of the Canadian labour market, the coordination of training and education and the development of national occupational standards and qualifications and mechanisms to recognize non-academic learning.

The Council of Ministers of Education in Canada (CMEC) is a national body of provincial/territorial education ministers that coordinates initiatives in the education sector. In 1993, the ministers committed to work together on a national education focus. Initiatives include a national forum on education and transferability of post-secondary education credits.[8]

In 1995, the CMEC approved the Pan-Canadian Protocol on the Transferability of University Credits, which covers the transfer of first- and second-year university course credits between similar programs. To date, all but five Canadian universities have signed the pan-Canadian agreement.[9] CMEC is not proceeding with a pan-Canadian agreement on other levels of credit transferability within the post-secondary system at this time, suggesting instead that this work progress jurisdiction by jurisdiction before attempting national coordination. Provincial deputy ministers of education have agreed to study transitions within the education sector, including issues related to credit recognition between colleges and universities.[10]

Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) sponsors the recognition of academic and vocational qualifications within particular sectors of the labour market and diagnostic studies of human resource issues within a particular sector. Sector studies are directed by steering committees that include representation of management, labour, education and government. A sector's key players are brought together to build consensus on key issues identified by the study and to recommend solutions to sector-wide human resource issues. Most of the more than 40 studies completed since 1990 include specific recommendations to each sector's post-secondary education infrastructure.

The exploration and initiation of a sector council can follow a sector study. To date, 20 councils have been established with the support of HRDC. Activities can include the

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development of occupational standards which influence education and training and accreditation for education/training programs. The Canadian Labour Force Development Board (CLFDB) works in collaboration with the sector councils to identify and address training needs.[11]

HRDC also supports the development of Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition by post-secondary education institutions. HRDC provides financial support to CLFDB's National Forum on PLAR and promotes its use by provincial educational and training institutions.

Two other interprovincial/territorial agreements affect credit mobility in Canada. The Labour Mobility Chapter of the Agreement of Internal Trade outlines the agreement of governments to work together to reconcile differences in occupational standards and to recognize qualifications from out-of-province/territory.[12] The interprovincial Red Seal program allows qualified tradespeople to practise in any province or territory in 44 trades.[13] It is administered by the Canadian Council of Directors of Apprenticeship. Both of these agreements support and encourage the portability of academic qualifications and occupational credentials. They provide models for the assessment of competencies and qualifications and for bridging programs for practitioners moving from one jurisdiction to another.

ECCE Post-Secondary Programs

In Canada, approximately 120 institutions[14] deliver ECCE certificate, diploma, post-diploma/certificate and degree programs through publicly-funded community colleges, collèges d'enseignement général et professionnel (cégeps), universities and private institutions. Most post-secondary ECCE programs are offered by publicly-funded institutions operated by a provincial/territorial government or a non-profit governing body. Approximately 20,000 individuals are currently enrolled in ECCE certificate and diploma programs, about 12,000 of whom are enrolled in continuing education and distance education, while just over 8,000 are enrolled in full-time programs.

The child care sector study[15] found that ECCE certificate and diploma program curricula contain similar content reflecting a common core of knowledge and skills. All certificate and diploma programs include a supervised field placement component and course content in child development, ECCE methodology and behaviour guidance. The age-range of children and the program delivery model focus varies among ECCE programs but the study reported an overall trend towards expanding the scope of ECCE post-secondary programs to include children from birth to 12 years in a variety of home-based and centre-based ECCE settings.

Within these broad commonalities, however, there are differences which contribute to difficulties in ECCE academic qualification portability and credit transfer between ECCE programs. There is considerable variation in the duration of certificate and diploma programs and field placements and in the organization of courses. Some of the specific differences are discussed later in this paper.

The child care sector study recognized the role of post-secondary ECCE programs in supporting career mobility within the early childhood workforce. It noted difficulties in the transferability and articulation of post-secondary ECCE credits within and among institutions in the same province and territory. There are further difficulties in carrying post-secondary ECCE credits across provinces and territories or from outside of Canada.

There are approximately 20 ECCE-related degree programs and Bachelor of Education (BEd) programs with a preschool or ECCE specialization offered at universities and university-colleges across Canada. Most offer some advanced standing or transfer of credit to individuals with ECCE certificate or diploma qualifications. These programs prepare individuals for supervisory and specialized roles and responsibilities in ECCE settings and related services (such as kindergarten programs within the school system, early childhood intervention services and family support programs).

ECCE Credential Requirements

The provincial/territorial requirements for regulated ECCE services, particularly requirements for staff qualifications in licensed child care centres, influence the organization of ECCE post-secondary training and education programs. Provincial/territorial legislation and regulations designate which ECCE services must be licensed, the staff qualifications and other conditions of operation. There are also provincial/territorial policies and procedures for establishing the equivalency of other ECCE credentials, including those from out-of-province. There is no Canada-wide agreement on the definition of a trained or qualified staff member or supervisor in a regulated ECCE setting.

The provincial/territorial requirements for ECCE credentials in regulated child care settings vary. New Brunswick and the Northwest Territories have no training requirements for centre directors and the Yukon is implementing training requirements. New Brunswick, the Northwest Territories and Newfoundland and Labrador have no training requirements for centre-based program staff. Saskatchewan only requires a 130-hour course for program staff.

- No jurisdiction requires specific age-related training for staff in school-age programs.
- Only Ontario and British Columbia have legislated specific training requirements for some staff working with children with identified special needs.
- Only Prince Edward Island and British Columbia require ongoing professional development for staff in centre-based programs.
- No jurisdiction requires centre directors to have specific training in child care administration or management. Only Manitoba requires centre directors to have a

post-diploma certificate, which can include child care management, child care for children with special needs, infant/toddler care or Aboriginal child care.

- There are minimal or no training requirements for regulated home-based child care providers, although in seven jurisdictions, providers are individually licensed, work alone and can care for mixed age groups of children. In six of those jurisdictions, providers do not have access to organized training, support or resources.

The majority of key informants in the child care sector study recommended increased training requirements for staff in centre-based programs, with a minimum one-year certificate or two-year diploma in ECCE for all staff in centre-based settings. They also recommended specific training for home-based child caregivers.

Credit and Credential Mobility

The structures of provincial/territorial post-secondary education and ECCE services create barriers to career mobility for members of the early childhood workforce wishing to cross jurisdictions to pursue further education or employment opportunities. These same barriers often confront early educators wishing to work in ECCE settings that may be outside of the regulated child care sector. The transferability, articulation and portability of ECCE credits and credentials are essential components of career mobility.

The table at the end of this section offers an overview of ECCE credit mobility across Canada, including key characteristics of post-secondary education systems and transfer of credits and ECCE qualification requirements and equivalency procedures.

There is no common terminology to describe the transfer of credits in post-secondary education among the provinces and territories. The definitions of transferability, articulation and portability used in this paper are described below.

Transferability

Transferability refers to the student's ability to transfer ECCE course credits to a similar program in another institution *before* having completed the course of study.[16] Every report or review of post-secondary systems in the past decade has identified the need to improve the transfer of credits, particularly between institutions.[17]

Many post-secondary programs in North America operate within similar time frames (semesters and terms) and instructional units or courses. Completed courses become credits and the transfer of credits before program completion requires comparable academic standards, including curriculum content and performance between institutions. This is difficult among independent institutions with varying roles, mandates and functions.[18]

Several jurisdictions have established province-wide bodies and policies to establish transferability procedures to guide institutions and students through the process. The procedures involve a formal recognition of credits on a course-by-course basis and generally require a complex set of conditions.[19] Recent initiatives have focused more on the transferability of university credits than on those within college systems. As mentioned earlier, there is a pan-Canadian agreement among universities on the transfer of first- and second-year credits within the same program or subject area.

The transferability of course credits between similar ECCE programs in the same provincial/territorial jurisdiction varies. Competencies or standard learning outcomes may provide a common basis for credit assessment, but differences in program organization often inhibit the direct transfer of credits. A provincial/territorial agreement on course credit equivalencies among a jurisdiction's ECCE programs seems to provide a more consistent assessment of credit transfers.

The Manitoba Colleges Early Childhood Education Committee is appointed by Manitoba government and determines the transferability of course credits. The government publishes the Manitoba Transfer Guide, which outlines course-by-course equivalency for student transfers from one program to another. Within this framework, the committee monitors course content and designates specific transferability among the three community college ECCE diploma programs, which enhances students' ability to transfer and receive full credit for their work to date.

In Ontario, the 1996 Early Childhood Education Program Standard covers two-year (four-semester) ECCE diploma programs approved by the Ministry of Education and Training for delivery by Ontario community colleges. The program standard was developed after extensive consultation with employers, professional associations, universities and program graduates. It represents a consensus of participating stakeholders' views of the essential learning that all ECCE diploma graduates should have achieved. The Program Standard ensures some consistency across the province's 22 ECCE diploma programs and may be slowly improving the students' ability to transfer credits between institutions before program completion. However, the Program Standard does not define how colleges organize their courses to meet the learning outcomes, so each college designs its own course structure and students often find it difficult to receive full credit for the first year when transferring to another institution to complete the second year of the diploma program.

In Quebec, the cégeps have, until recently, followed a common provincial curriculum which supported the transfer of full-course credits between institutions. The switch to a competency-based curriculum model for ECCE programs will allow each institution more autonomy in organizing program structure and may present complications for students who wish to transfer credits before completing the three-year program.

The transferability of credits between different delivery models (full-time, continuing education and distance education) is another issue for ECCE programs. In some institutions, full transferability between various delivery models within the same institution may be problematic. In many instances, the organization and structure of courses and field placements vary from one delivery model to another.

In Newfoundland, the College of the North Atlantic follows the guidelines for the transfer of credits between the ECCE diploma full-time program and the distance education program. In British Columbia, the recognition of course credits between continuing education and full-time programs remains problematic in some institutions. In Ontario, the ability to transfer credits between full-time, continuing education and distance education ECCE diploma programs is established by individual institutions. In some instances, the organization of courses and field placements within the full-time program and the continuing education program are quite different and it is difficult to establish course equivalency and full transferability of credits.

The transfer of course credits before program completion across jurisdictions appears to be assessed on an individual, course-by-course basis. PLAR is another type of transferability of credit. The survey of post-secondary institutions conducted for the child care sector study found that more than two-thirds of the institutions offering ECCE certificates and diplomas used PLAR as a mechanism to grant advance standing or course credits for prior learning through work or education experiences. PLAR offers a mechanism to bridge the practical skills and knowledge acquired by many caregivers without ECCE academic qualifications to post-secondary education programs. It may also be a process to recognize learning acquired through post-secondary education experiences that are not eligible for a transfer of credit.

Articulation

Articulation refers to the student's ability to obtain advanced standing in another program at the same or a different institution after successful completion of the course of study.[20] There are a variety of articulation pathways in Canadian higher education. In ECCE, the most common practices are block transfer of course credits, specific articulation agreements between institutions and course-by-course assessment of equivalency.

Block Transfer

A "block transfer" grants the transfer of a standard block of course credits for a completed a certificate, diploma or degree program from a recognized post-secondary institution towards another program. The block transfer of credit may be established by a province/territory-wide policy or by programs within individual institutions. Block transfer articulation paths from ECCE diplomas and certificates to university undergraduate degree programs are typically facilitated by individual agreements between institutions and not by province- or territory-wide policies. There is no national inventory of these agreements.

Several provinces (including the Newfoundland, British Columbia and Alberta) have established provincial guides which stipulate standard block transfer of credits between programs.

University transfer programs, college-universities and associate degrees facilitate full credit transfer between university and college programs. These initiatives are offered in selected British Columbia and Alberta institutions but are mostly confined to arts and science subjects. Most Canadian colleges offer one-, two- or three-year career programs, such as ECCE, and are not able to qualify for the full transfer of credits or articulation into university undergraduate degree programs.[21] Nursing is one notable exception.

The School of Child and Youth Care at University of Victoria (described later in this paper) offers the most extensive block transfer of credits for ECCE certificate and diploma programs in Canada. The University of Regina offers a block transfer for selected ECCE certificate and diploma courses credits from the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology towards its Bachelor of Arts (BA) ECCE program.

In Ontario, there are one-year ECCE certificate programs that are not recognized for any advanced standing or articulation into the two-year ECCE diploma program offered by the same institution. At other institutions, similar ECCE certificate programs are eligible for a block transfer into the second year of the ECCE diploma program.

Most ECCE post-secondary education programs are certificate or diploma programs offered through colleges or cégeps. Articulation to university degree programs is often limited by the barriers that separate college and university systems. This is particularly evident in Ontario where there are few opportunities for a full block transfer of credits from college to university post-secondary programs. The ECCE degree programs in Ontario usually offer a block transfer of credits, which partially recognizes ECCE diploma credits.

Several college ECCE diploma programs in Ontario grant students with a social science university undergraduate degree (which usually includes child development courses) a block transfer into second year. There are ECCE programs in Canada that require the completion of another ECCE post-secondary program to be eligible for admission. In practice, the first academic qualification is recognized as a block transfer of credit towards a second qualification.

In British Columbia, a basic ECCE certificate is required for admission to a post-basic ECCE certificate and ECCE diploma program. In Saskatchewan, an ECCE certificate is required for admission to an ECCE diploma program. However, in both instances, the articulation from a certificate to a diploma program is not automatic; certificate graduates must apply for admission to diploma programs. In Nova Scotia, an ECCE certificate is required for admission to the ECCE diploma program.

Articulation Agreements Between Institutions

Articulation agreements between two post-secondary institutions outline a specific transfer of credit for a certificate, diploma or degree program from one institution (the sending institution) towards a program in the second institution (the receiving institution). The two participating institutions have negotiated an agreement which only applies to their particular ECCE programs. Articulation agreements can be established for institutions within or across provincial/territorial jurisdictions.

Institutional articulation agreements represent the most common articulation pathway in Ontario. In recent years, several college and university partners have entered into such agreements in several program areas, including ECCE.[22] An updated publication of the *Ontario Transfer Credit* is expected to document all such agreements within Ontario and be available on-line.

In some instances, a university partner offering a degree program will establish several individual articulation agreements with ECCE college programs. This may develop into a broader block transfer of credits for an ECCE diploma or certificate.

Course-by-Course Transfer of Credits

The course-by-course transfer of credits between two post-secondary education programs may occur on an individual basis. The student applicant submits her or his academic transcript and possibly accompanying documentation, such as course outlines, and the academic qualification is considered for course exemptions towards a second program.

Articulation Between ECCE and Teacher Education Programs

The career path between ECCE settings and kindergarten and primary classes within the school system is one that interests many in the early childhood workforce. However, articulation between ECCE qualifications and provincial/territorial teacher education programs is very limited. Teacher education programs are either four- or five-year degree programs or a second degree program, which requires an undergraduate degree for admission. Most ECCE qualifications are certificate or diploma programs, which seldom articulate into either type of teacher education degree.

Portability

Portability refers to the ability to transfer an ECCE credential from one province or territory to another in Canada or to early childhood services outside of licensed centre-based programs (e.g., kindergarten programs within the school system or early intervention programs). The provincial/territorial profiles indicate that the determination of the equivalency of out-of-province/territory ECCE credentials is usually the responsibility of the government department or ministry responsible for licensing child care programs.

In Ontario and British Columbia, the assessment of equivalent ECCE qualifications is delegated to non-government bodies. Ontario is the only jurisdiction to grant the authority to determine the equivalency of qualifications to a professional organization, the Association of Early Childhood Education, Ontario (AECEO). The AECEO's process is guided by a list of ECCE post-secondary programs assessed as equivalent to the Ontario community college ECCE diploma. Other ECCE qualifications are assessed on a course-by-course basis. In 1997, the equivalency process in British Columbia moved from the government to the International Credential Service, which is a non-governmental body operated by the Open Learning Agency.

In practice, individuals with ECCE credentials recognized in one jurisdiction often face complications in establishing equivalent status in another province or territory. Equivalency for out-of-province/territory credentials is often based on a course-by-course assessment that requires considerable documentation of course outlines and descriptions. Specific provincial/territorial requirements for similar ECCE credentials vary, often limiting the ability of early educators to receive full recognition for out-of-province/territory ECCE credentials.[23] The variability in the length of ECCE post-secondary programs across Canada contributes to difficulties in granting equivalency to out-of-province educational qualifications. In some instances, the equivalency assessment of out-of-province ECCE credentials is not reciprocal between two jurisdictions.

In Ontario, recent credentials that are on the list of equivalent ECCE programs may not be automatically granted equivalent status. The list of equivalent programs was last reviewed in 1996 and some ECCE post-secondary programs have made changes which necessitate a closer scrutiny of the qualification of graduates from these programs.

An individual with a Child Care Worker III classification from Manitoba may not be granted equivalency for a certificate (and a licence to practice as an Early Childhood Educator) in British Columbia if the credential is a degree rather than an ECCE diploma. The related training and credentials would be assessed on a course-by-course basis and the number of hours of various courses, their specific content and the types of practica done would all be reviewed.

The Ontario equivalency process recognizes ECCE Post-Basic Certificate/Diploma programs from British Columbia as equivalent to the Ontario ECCE Diploma. However, British Columbia's equivalency procedure assesses Ontario's ECCE Diploma on a course-by-course basis and often requires additional credit courses to be recognized as an infant/toddler educator. An ECCE diploma graduate from an Ontario community college is qualified in that province to work with infants and toddlers in a regulated child care setting. The provincial learning outcomes for post-secondary ECCE diploma programs include a focus on this age group. However, a graduate moving to British Columbia must submit detailed course outlines and documentation of field placement hours in an infant or toddler setting to meet that jurisdiction's requirements for a qualified infant educator. In some cases, the Ontario ECCE diploma graduate will be short 50 hours of the 500-hour field infant/toddler placement requirement and not be granted equivalency for credentials.

The Ontario list of equivalent ECCE diploma qualifications from Quebec lists diploma of college studies (DECs) from some cégeps but not others, even though the list was compiled when Quebec programs shared a common curriculum.

The portability of ECCE credentials from approved proprietary institutions is more limited than those from public approved institutions. For instance, ECCE diplomas from Academy Canada Career College and The Career Academy (both in Newfoundland) are not recognized in Ontario or Nova Scotia as equivalent qualifications or as eligible for voluntary certification.

With very few exceptions, ECCE credentials are not recognized as qualifications for teaching positions in kindergarten or primary grade programs in school systems. Most teaching qualifications are not recognized in regulated ECCE settings. The exceptions are education degree programs with an early childhood education or preschool specialization. These credentials are recognized in both regulated centre-based programs and in kindergarten programs within the school system.

OVERVIEW OF PROVINCIAL/TERRITORIAL ECCE CREDIT MOBILITY[24]

Province/ Territory	ECCE Credential Requirements	Credential Equivalency Process	Post-secondary ECCE Programs	Transfer of Credit
British Columbia	Each preschool group requires an Early Childhood Educator. Each group of infants/toddlers requires one Early Childhood Educator (basic ECCE certificate, plus 500 hours of supervised work experience plus provincial licence to practise) and one Infant/Toddler Educator (post-basic ECCE certificate/ECCE diploma with infant/toddler training plus provincial licence to practise). All other staff within the child:staff ratio must be Early Childhood Assistants (either in the process of qualifying for a basic ECCE certificate or completion of a training program equivalent to one course of a basic ECCE certificate).	Equivalency process for out-of-province credentials carried out by International Credential Service. ECCE certificate or diploma from approved public institution in Canada granted within past 10 years is deemed equivalent and there is no cost to the individual to be granted equivalency. ECCE credentials from private institutions or from outside Canada, incomplete ECCE training or related training other than ECCE is assessed for equivalency on a course-by-course basis for fee of approximately $200. Equivalency for Infant/Toddler Educator and Special/Needs Educator is also assessed on a course-by-course basis.	Basic and post-basic ECCE certificates and ECCE diplomas offered at 15 publicly-funded and five private colleges and university-colleges. BA (Child and Youth Care) offered at University of Victoria and two university-colleges. Family day care (150-hour) certificate offered at seven colleges. ECCE post-secondary programs approved by Community Care Facilities Branch, Ministry of Health.	Council of Admissions and Transfers establishes policies and procedures related to transfer of credit and prior learning assessment. ECCE Articulation Committee is part of Council and forum for discussion and coordination among ECCE programs. Transferability of course credits between programs and institutions by individual agreements. Articulation through block transfer and course-by-course assessment. Multilateral Task Force will establish common expectations for all first-year human service programs offered in British Columbia colleges.

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Province/ Territory	**ECCE Credential Requirements**	**Credential Equivalency Process**	**Post-secondary ECCE Programs**	**Transfer of Credit**
Alberta	All centre staff are required to have Level I qualifications (Orientation Qualification Certificate). One in four staff is required to have Level II qualifications (Basic Qualification Certificate). Program directors are required to have Level III qualifications (Advanced Qualification Certificate). Level III: two-year ECCE diploma or equivalent. Level II : one-year ECCE certificate or equivalent. Level I: 50-hour orientation course.	Equivalency is undertaken by the Staff Qualifications Branch of Alberta Family and Social Services and is assessed on a course-by- course basis. There is no cost to the individual.	Publicly-funded universities and private colleges are degree-granting institutions. BEd ECCE specialization offered at University of Alberta and BA ECCE at University Of Calgary. Nine publicly-funded colleges and Alberta Vocational College offer one-year ECCE certificate and two-year ECCE diploma programs. Private institutions also offer ECCE certificate and diploma programs, recognized by government certification. Public and private post-secondary institutions offer 50-houorientation course. Public colleges, universities and institutes governed by board of governors.	Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer is responsible for policies, guidelines and procedures to facilitate transfer agreements among post-secondary institutions and programs, including ECCE programs. Transfer of credit agreements and arrangements are published in *Alberta Transfer Guide.* ECCE certificate programs articulate to diploma programs within the same institution.

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Province/ Territory	**ECCE Credential Requirements**	**Credential Equivalency Process**	**Post-secondary ECCE Programs**	**Transfer of Credit**
Saskatchewan	All staff are required to have a 130-hour orientation course or equivalent unless they have an ECCE certificate or diploma. One staff in each centre is required to have a first aid certificate. Supervisors are required to have an ECCE certificate or equivalent.	Equivalency is undertaken by the Department of Social Services except for international applicants who are assessed by the International Qualifications Assessment Service in Edmonton, under agreement with Alberta Labour. The cost for international assessments range from $75 to $150. Some out-of-province ECCE post-secondary qualifications are accepted at face value, but others are assessed on a course-by-course basis against the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology (SIAST) criteria, according to the requirements of the *Child Care Act*. Related training is assessed on a case-by-case basis with a review of individual course content. There is no charge to the individual.	Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology (SIAST) has three campuses in Saskatoon, Regina and Prince Albert that offer ECCE certificate and diploma programs. The 130-hour orientation course is available through SIAST and regional colleges. SIAST is a publicly-funded institution with a government appointed board of governors. University of Regina offers BEd ECCE.	Graduates of the 130-hour orientation course are granted three modules towards the one-year certificate. Articulation of ECCE certificate to ECCE diploma among SIAST campuses. Block transfer for selected ECCE certificate and diploma course credits towards BEd ECCE at University of Regina.

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Province/ Territory	ECCE Credential Requirements	Credential Equivalency Process	Post-secondary ECCE Programs	Transfer of Credit
Manitoba	Two-thirds of full-time staff in child care centres must meet the requirements of a Child Care Worker II or III. Others must meet requirements of a Child Care Worker I. One-half of staff in a nursery school where a child is enrolled four or more part-days per week, must meet the requirements of a CCW II or III. Child Care Worker I: grade 12 diploma, any post-secondary certificate, diploma or degree unrelated to child care or one post-secondary course in ECCE. Child Care Worker II: completion of an approved ECCE diploma or equivalent or a recognized competency-based assessment program. Child Care Worker III: same as CCWII plus minimum of 240-course hours further training in an area of recognized specialization or approved university degree programs or Human Ecology degree in Child Care Stream (University of Manitoba) or joint ECCE diploma/Developmental Studies degree from Red River College and University of Winnipeg or Human Ecology degree in Child Care Stream (University of Manitoba) or joint ECCE diploma/Developmental Studies degree from Red River College and University of Winnipeg.	Successful completion of a competency-based assessment qualifies an individual as a Child Care Worker II offered by the Manitoba government Child Day Care. This assessment takes approximately eight months, requires the preparation of a portfolio and four separate assessments; the process involves parents, staff and board members from the child care centre where the staff is employed. Equivalency for out-of-province qualifications are assessed by the Child Day Care Branch. Most out-of-province ECCE diplomas are assessed as equivalent to requirements of CCWII. Out-of-country qualifications are assessed in consultation with the Department of Culture.	ECCE diploma and post-diploma programs offered at three colleges. On-site, off-site, distance education, full-time and continuing education models of delivery. Both University of Winnipeg and University of Manitoba offer ECCE-related degree programs. University of Manitoba also offers post-diploma program in child care management. ECCE Program Approval Committee: representation from Manitoba Child Care Association, community college, government, etc. to approve diploma programs and recognize post-diploma certificates as eligible credentials for designation of child care worker levels.	Transfer of course credits among college programs based on province-wide agreement. Manitoba Colleges ECCE Committee monitors course content and designates specific transferability. Articulation between diploma and degree programs established through specific articulation agreements between institutions.

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Province/ Territory	ECCE Credential Requirements	Credential Equivalency Process	Post-secondary ECCE Programs	Transfer of Credit
Ontario	One staff in each group is required to have an Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology (OCAAT) ECCE diploma or equivalent. Resource teachers working with identified children with special needs are required to have ECCE diploma or equivalent and have completed a post-secondary program related to the needs of children with a disability. Centre supervisors are required to have an ECCE diploma and at least two years experience in a child care centre with children of similar ages and developmental levels.	Equivalency of credentials not from OCAAT (including those from within Ontario or from out-of-province) undertaken by the Association of Early Childhood Education, Ontario. Letter of Recognition: Eligible applicants submit transcripts, credentials and $50. Eligibility is automatic if the credential comes from the list of equivalent credentials (i.e. a credential must match OCAAT's Program Standard for ECCE diplomas). Most out-of-province diplomas eligible, including post-basic certificates from British Columbia. Letter of Equivalency: Eligible applicants have completed studies in child-related area which meet minimum 75 per cent of Ontario learning outcomes. Missing areas identified and individuals sent to colleges to take appropriate courses. Once the courses are completed, individuals send transcripts in and receive a letter of equivalency.	Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology: 25 colleges offer ECCE post-secondary education programs. Includes certificate, diploma and post-diploma programs. Universities: Guelph, Brock, Carleton and Ryerson offer undergraduate ECCE-related degree programs. Guelph and Toronto offer graduate degree programs. Board of governors for each college and university institution. The Ministry of Education and Training approves programs offered by colleges and is responsible for their overall governance. An ECCE Program Standard outlining learning outcomes for Ontario. ECCE diploma programs completed in 1996. Program Standard for ECCE certificate programs completed in 1997. Aboriginal ECCE Program Standard in development.	Articulation agreements between individual community colleges and universities are program specific. Overall transfer of credit between OCAAT and universities has been limited, but articulation agreements between institutions increasing. Articulation of ECCE diploma to ECCE degree programs through block transfer and individual articulation agreements. ECCE certificates may or may not articulate to the second year of ECCE diploma programs. Transferability of course credits between ECCE programs varies. A few teacher education programs designate specific spaces for ECCE graduates (who also have degrees) each year.

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Province/ Territory	ECCE Credential Requirements	Credential Equivalency Process	Post-secondary ECCE Programs	Transfer of Credit
Quebec	Two-thirds of staff are required to have a diploma of college studies (DEC) in early childhood education; a degree in preschool education, psychology with a focus on child development, or Child Studies or ECCE certificate, or attestation of college studies (AEC) in early childhood education and three years experience with groups of preschool children in a child care service, health, social service or education establishment.	The Ministry of Families and Children is responsible for equivalency process. An individual employed at least 60 per cent of full-time between 1983 to 1988 in a Quebec child care centre and who has successfully completed 45-hour courses in each of child development, health and hygiene of the young child, developing activity programs for young children and child day care services in Quebec is considered to have equivalent qualifications. Out-of-province qualifications assessed on individual basis. Most ECCE diplomas from publicly-funded post-secondary institutions assessed as equivalent.	Universities: Concordia University offers undergraduate and graduate degree ECCE programs. Université de Québec and Laval offer BEd programs with preschool education focus. McGill offers BA ECCE program. Cégeps: Intermediate level of education between secondary schools and universities. Offer two-year certificate (CEC) and three-year diploma (DEC) ECCE programs. Also offers Attestation (AEC) programs in ECCE for adult learners through continuing education. Cégeps moved from central curriculum standards to a competency-based curriculum model which offers individual institutions more autonomy in the organization of curriculum content.	Cégep pre-university two-year programs and career (including ECCE) three-year programs are eligible for entry into university undergraduate program. Specific university programs have identified prerequisites. Transferability of credit before completion of cégep ECCE program based on assessed credit equivalencies by the receiving institution.
New Brunswick	No mandatory post-secondary training requirements Staff must be at least 16 years old. Those under 19 must be supervised by a primary staff who is a minimum of 19 years old.	N/A	Universities: BEd programs with ECCE major offered at Moncton and New Brunswick. Publicly-funded institutions with board of governors. Colleges: New Brunswick Community College includes five anglophone and four francophone campuses. ECCE certificate program offered at two campuses. Each campus operates under the direction of the provincial Department of Advanced Education and Labour.	No reciprocal transfer of credit agreements set up for ECCE programs.

Province/ Territory	ECCE Credential Requirements	Credential Equivalency Process	Post-secondary ECCE Programs	Transfer of Credit
Nova Scotia	Two-thirds of staff are required to have completed an approved training program in ECCE or its equivalent.	Equivalency is undertaken by Prevention and Child Care Services. For individuals without an ECCE credential, equivalency is considered to be completion of grade 12, a minimum of two years experience in a licensed child care facility, completion of a full credit in a post-secondary education program in either curriculum development or child development and successful completion of 25 hours in training programs and workshop not completed by way of post-secondary education. Most out-of-province ECCE certificate and diploma programs from publicly-funded institutions accepted as equivalent qualifications.	Nova Scotia Community College: province-wide system of post-secondary training and education which offers ECCE certificate programs at three campuses. ECCE Diploma offered at two NSCC campuses. Institute for ECCE and Developmental Services offers an ECCE diploma program and a Special Education Certificate and St. Joseph's Children's Centre offers an ECCE certificate program. Mount Saint Vincent University offers a four-year ECCE degree program.	Articulation agreement with Atlantic community colleges and Mount Saint Vincent University recognizing advanced standing for ECCE diplomas in the ECCE degree program. ECCE degree includes 16 arts and science credits which are transferable to any university undergraduate program in Canada.

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Province/ Territory	ECCE Credential Requirements	Credential Equivalency Process	Post-secondary ECCE Programs	Transfer of Credit
Prince Edward Island	One full-time program staff in each centre is required to have an ECCE certificate or diploma. Centre supervisors are required to have one of the following: one-year ECCE certificate and three years experience; two-year ECCE diploma and two years experience; a Bachelor of Child Study with no requirement for experience. Centre supervisor and one program staff in school-age programs are required to have completed 30 hours post-secondary training in child development appropriate to the age group. To be designated as a centre supervisor or the trained program staff, qualifications must be submitted to the Child Care Facilities Board for approval and certification. The certificate must be renewed every three years with proof of 30 hours approved in-service training.	Equivalency is undertaken by the Child Care Facilities Board. Child Study degree is recognized for supervisor qualifications. Individuals with related degree required to take two ECCE courses. An out-of-province certificate or diploma recognized as equivalent if from a post-secondary institution approved by department of education in that particular province, not by the department of industry where it may be approved as a business (in that case it would be reviewed on a course-by-course basis). Individuals with certificate or diploma in a related field (e.g., nursing) required to take four ECCE courses. To be a supervisor, proof of the appropriate length of experience is required. International credentials reviewed in consultation with the Department of Education No fee for the equivalency process but this is under review.	Holland College: publicly-funded community college offers ECCE diploma.	Advanced standing for ECCE diploma at University of New Brunswick and Mount St. Vincent University.

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Province/ Territory	ECCE Credential Requirements	Credential Equivalency Process	Post-secondary ECCE Programs	Transfer of Credit
Newfoundland	There are no mandatory post-secondary training requirements for program staff. Centre supervisors are required to have an ECCE certificate and one year experience in a licensed centre, or an ECCE diploma with no requirement for experience, or a degree in a related field appropriate to the age group in the centre.	Equivalency is the responsibility of the Daycare and Homemakers Services Licensing Board. Qualifications are reviewed internally and then proposed to the Licensing Board for approval. The individual must have applied for a job as a supervisor and be deemed to be the best candidate for this process to be done. There is no charge to the individual for equivalency.	College of the North Atlantic is a publicly-funded certificate and diploma-granting institution. Offers ECCE diploma program at two campuses and through distance education. ECCE certificate program offered at one campus but will be phased out. Private training institutions offering courses of 50 or more instructional hours are required to register with Department of Education. Two offer ECCE diploma program.	Established transferability of course credits between distance education and on-site ECCE diploma program at both campuses. College of North Atlantic articulation agreement with College of Northern Scotland: ECCE diploma recognized two years advanced standing in four year BA ECCE program. Offered through distance education. Advanced standing offered for College of the North Atlantic ECCE diploma in ECCE degree program at Mount Saint Vincent. Articulation agreement between College of the North Atlantic and Northern College in Scotland. ECCE diploma recognized for two-year advanced standing in the four-year BA ECCE program. Offered through distance education for ECCE diploma.
Northwest Territories	No mandatory post-secondary training requirements. Primary staff must be at least 19 years old and have a first aid certificate	N/A	Two publicly-funded colleges offer one-year ECCE certificate program: College Aurora and Nunavut Arctic College.	Transfer of credit from ECCE Day Home program into ECCE certificate program.

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Province/ Territory	ECCE Credential Requirements	Credential Equivalency Process	Post-secondary ECCE Programs	Transfer of Credit
Yukon	At least 50 per cent of staff are required to have at least Child Care Worker I qualifications. A certification process will be fully required in the year 2000. Qualifications are submitted to the Child Care Services Unit for certification in appropriate category. Child Care Worker I: 60-hour introduction to early childhood development course or equivalent. Child Care Worker II: one-year early childhood development training or equivalent. Child Care Worker III: two or more-years early childhood development training or equivalent.	Child Care Services Unit carries out equivalency process assessed on a course-by-course basis.	Yukon College is a publicly-funded, multi-campus institution offering a two-year ECCE diploma program.	Successful completion of four workshops over 60 hours of the Partners for Children training program offered at Yukon College or in the community will give an individual a Level I certification. Completing this program gives individuals four credits towards an ECCE certificate or diploma. Articulation agreement for advance standing (two years) at University of Victoria, BA, Child and Youth Care.

Innovative Practices

The provincial/territorial profiles illustrate both the limitations of and expanding opportunities for ECCE credit mobility in Canada. While there is no clear ECCE credit or credential mobility path in Canada, there are examples of innovative practices among post-secondary institutions to facilitate mobility. The following three case studies highlight formal arrangements and policies among post-secondary institutions and illustrate promising approaches and policy directions.

Each case study describes the programs offered, identifies the transfer of credit arrangements and the policies that facilitate credit mobility and profiles the students who participate in the programs. The case study summary is based on key informant interviews with individuals from each program and identifies barriers that the initiatives have encountered and factors that have contributed to their success.

School of Child and Youth Care (SCYC), University of Victoria

The School of Child and Youth Care was established in 1973 and is part of the Faculty of Human and Social Development at the University of Victoria. The school focuses on the

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well-being of children, adolescents and their families and on addressing their social and emotional needs. It is designed to prepare graduates for front-line and supervisory positions in child and youth care positions in a wide range of settings, including schools, group homes, child care programs, early intervention programs, young offender programs and hospitals. Many graduates are employed in jobs that provide intensive and therapeutic care to special needs children and youth. Others work in the areas of assessment, observation, communication, behaviour management, case planning and research and evaluation.

The School of Child and Youth Care currently offers:

- Bachelor of Arts in Child and Youth Care, on-site and distance education;
- Multidisciplinary Masters degree in Social Work, Nursing and Child and Youth Care (which the School has applied to offer through distance education. If approval is granted, the program would start in January 1999).

The two-year Diploma in Child and Youth Care was developed on an individual basis with First Nations communities and is delivered in those communities. Students who have received a Child and Youth Care diploma through an Aboriginal community partnership are eligible for certification as an Early Childhood Educator in British Columbia.

The BA in Child and Youth Care is a three-year program, which follows one year of preparatory study. Students require 60 completed units to graduate, at least 30 of which must be completed at the University of Victoria.

History/Background

Since the early 1980s, the University of Victoria permitted professional schools to award up to 12 units of credit towards a degree, if they so chose. The School of Child and Youth Care began to implement this provision in 1982, on the initiative of individual faculty members. Initially, students' previous course credits were reviewed on an individual basis. Beginning in 1983, this was changed to a block credit for a related certificate or diploma from any recognized college or university. Specific articulation agreements were also developed and refined, on the initiative of faculty members, with a number of colleges that have human development programs.

Admission Requirements

Applicants to the on-campus program require completion of 12 first-year university units, including three units of university transferable-English completed with at least a C+ average. Students are selected on the basis of academic standing, paid and volunteer experience and a personal interview. Applicants to the distance education program must have completed four core 200-level courses and three units of 100-level university-transfer English, with a minimum average of C+ in each course. These prerequisite courses can be taken either through University of Victoria or the Open Learning Agency. Upon completion of the prerequisites, students can apply for admission to the School of Child and Youth Care. There are no prerequisites for the 200-level courses taken by distance education.

The school extends opportunities to applicants who may not meet the normal requirements of admission through the Special Access category.

Transfer of Credit

The School of Child and Youth Care has articulation agreements with Malaspina University College, University College of Fraser Valley and from Douglas, Lethbridge, Mount Royal and Grant McEwan colleges. Graduates of the two-year diploma programs in Child and Youth Care from these institutions may transfer directly into third year at University of Victoria. Students with a Human Services Diploma from Selkirk College may also transfer directly into third year. Discussions are now underway to extend articulation agreements to another eight Canadian institutions which offer Child and Youth Care diploma programs.

Students who have a certificate or a diploma from a recognized Canadian post-secondary institution in any human services development area (including ECCE), with at least a 70 per cent average, are eligible to receive a block transfer of credits. Fifteen credits are given for a one-year certificate and 30 for a two-year diploma. Students entering the SCYC program with a two-year diploma are usually required to take the four 200-level core courses.

A Multidisciplinary Master's in Policy and Practice in Health and Social Services is available to graduates of child and youth care, nursing and social work. Child and Youth Care applicants require a BA in Child and Youth Care or an undergraduate degree in the social sciences. An average of B+ for the last two years of undergraduate study is usually required for admission. Applicants must also have two years professional experience after completing their undergraduate degree before admission into the master's program.

There are no transfer agreements with other post-secondary institutions in Canada that grant ECCE degrees or Child and Youth Care degrees.

The School of Child and Youth Care developed a degree partnership with Malaspina University College and the University College of the Fraser Valley six years ago. Students enrol in Child and Youth Care at the two university colleges and, upon program completion, receive a University of Victoria Child and Youth Care degree. Malaspina began granting its own Child and Youth Care degrees last year and the University College of the Fraser Valley will begin granting its own Child and Youth Care degrees for new program applicants who enrol in the program beginning in September 1998.

The School of Child and Youth Care diploma program through distance education is widely available in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario and the territories. Arrangements have also been made on a case-by-case basis for students in other provinces and countries to complete SCYC degrees by distance education.

Program Description

The BA Child and Youth Care program includes both academic core and elective courses and field placements. The course of study includes general or liberal education and specific professional education for employment with children and youth. Courses range from human growth and development to professional practice with children, youth and families. There is a focus on caregiving, normative development and social context as the basis for therapeutic intervention. Electives may be chosen from a wide range of available courses throughout the university in other faculties. This may facilitate transfers into other areas, such as education, after graduation or ensure necessary course credits to meet ECCE credential requirements. On-campus students may choose to take Child and Youth Care electives by distance education.

Students complete two Child and Youth Care field placement of practicum experiences in the third and fourth year of the program. The placement is either 10 hours per week plus supervisory time from September to April, or a block placement in May and June. Distance education students have the same practicum requirements. Practicum settings range from early intervention with special needs infants to youth correction programs.

Student Information

Approximately 50 students are accepted into the 200-level on-campus Child and Youth Care program, with room for an additional eight to 15 students in third year. Another 55 students are accepted annually into the third-year of the distance education program. Over 1,500 students have enrolled in Child and Youth Care distance education courses since its implementation 12 years ago. Currently, about 40 per cent of students transfer into the program from the college system, with about 25 per cent having a college credential.

A 1992 survey of SCYC graduates[26] found that about 15 per cent of the students in the Child and Youth Care BA program had an ECCE certificate or diploma. Within six months of graduation, 93 per cent of all survey respondents found employment in the field. Thirteen per cent were employed in ECCE settings in a range of positions, including early childhood educator, early intervention program manager, infant development worker, infant development consultant, special needs day care worker, special needs educator and preschool supervisor. The majority of graduates from the SCYC program are employed to provide therapeutic care to children and youth with special needs.

The SCYC has tracked student performance for several years. The findings have indicated that students transferring into the program from the college system are at a comparable level to other students by the fourth year; that is, no problems have been indicated by granting advanced standing for students with college credits and credentials.

Early Childhood Education Program, Red River College[27]

Red River College, located in Winnipeg, Manitoba, began to offer a two-year Early Childhood Education diploma program in 1971. Graduates from this program are eligible for classification as Child Care Worker II by the Manitoba government. Early educators with a CCW II classification are qualified staff members in Manitoba's licensed child care centres and nursery schools (operated outside of the school system).

Red River College offers:

- an on-site ECCE diploma full-time program;
- off-site ECCE diploma program at an Aboriginal Head Start program;
- first-year courses through continuing education and distance education;
- off-site full-time ECCE diploma program in four First Nations communities;
- post-diploma programs in infant care, special needs and Aboriginal child care; and
- concurrent four-year ECCE diploma and BA Developmental Studies with the University of Winnipeg.

The ECCE diploma from Red River College meets requirements for Manitoba's Child Care Worker II designation and the post-diploma programs meet requirements for Child Care Worker III.

History/Background

The faculty in the Early Childhood Education program at Red River College have made student accessibility to the ECCE diploma program a priority. Efforts to develop flexible delivery models are enhanced by a supportive college administration. Articulation agreements with the University of Manitoba and the University of Winnipeg and post-diploma programs ensure graduates have opportunities to pursue further studies. The articulation agreements have been in place for more than 20 years. The 1993 Roblin Commission report, which recommended increased transfer of credits between colleges and universities, has encouraged all parties to review the articulation agreements.

Admission Requirements and Transfer of Credit

Course credits can be transferred between the various ECCE delivery modes offered at Red River College. It is also possible to transfer ECCE course credits from Red River College to ECCE diploma programs at other Manitoba colleges. A provincial-wide agreement among the

Manitoba community colleges supports consistent ECCE course credit transfers among the province's three community colleges.

Red River graduates may transfer their ECCE diploma credits to university studies. Red River College has established articulation agreements with degree programs at both the University of Manitoba and University of Winnipeg. ECCE diploma graduates receive advanced standing or transfer of credit, equivalent to one academic year, towards a three-year Developmental Studies Program at University of Winnipeg or to a Bachelor of Human Ecology, Child Studies program at University of Manitoba.

In recent developments, Red River College and the University of Winnipeg established a concurrent four-year ECCE diploma/ developmental studies degree program. The University of Manitoba is considering increasing the transfer of credit to the degree program from one to one and two-thirds years for an ECCE diploma. Red River College is now negotiating a new articulation agreement with the BEd program at Brandon University. This arrangement would allow ECCE diploma graduates from Red River College to receive two years advanced standing towards a five-year BEd with Early Childhood Education Specialty. (The ECCE diploma program at Assiniboine College already has such an agreement in place with Brandon University.)

The ECCE diploma graduates meet the requirements for staff qualifications in most jurisdictions across Canada.

Description of ECCE Programs

In 1985, Red River Community College began to convert its ECCE diploma program curriculum content to a competency-based model. The academic courses are now organized around core competencies for entry-level early educators. Each of the courses or modules has a learning package which faculty members review regularly and update to include current research and events. Each of the individual learning packages is clear about what the student needs to learn and how she or he can demonstrate the learning.

In addition to course work, ECCE students complete six field placements or the equivalent of about 18 weeks in total. Five of the placements are in preschool ECCE settings and one is divided between an infant/toddler and a school-age ECCE setting. Each field placement is supported by an integration seminar. The course modules, field placements and integration seminars are organized into three 12-week blocks each year. In total, the ECCE diploma program is 72 weeks long.

The ECCE diploma program is offered on-site on a full-time basis but the first year of the program is also offered on a part-time basis through continuing education and distance education. The first-year courses are offered in four off-site locations in First Nations communities outside of Winnipeg.

The competency-based approach and course content organized in learning packages has made it possible for students to switch from part-time or distance education to the full-time program with full recognition of their course credits. It has also allowed for a consistent recognition of credits through Prior Learning Assessment.

Student Information

There are approximately 55 to 60 first-year and 40 to 45 second-year students enrolled in the full-time, on-site ECCE diploma program; 90 in continuing education; 75 in distance education; and 60 in off-site programs. In 1997, 42 students graduated with ECCE diplomas.

The off-site continuing education and distance education delivery models extend the accessibility of the ECCE diploma program.

In 1995/96, 97 per cent of the ECCE diploma graduates from Red River College reported employment in areas related to their studies. Most ECCE graduates find employment in a child care centre or nursery school. Many return to Red River College to participate in one of its continuing education post-diploma programs (Studies in Aboriginal Child Care, Studies in Special Needs Child Care or Infant Care). One or two ECCE graduates each year pursue further studies in the programs at the University of Manitoba or University of Winnipeg. A few other ECCE graduates enter these programs after four or five years work experience in the child care sector.

Early Childhood Education Program, Algonquin College[28]

Algonquin College in Ottawa, Ontario offers:

- Early Childhood Education full-time, two-year diploma through the Family Studies department at the Woodroffe campus in Ottawa and at the Pembroke campus;
- ECCE two-year diploma through Continuing Education at the Woodroffe campus;
- ECCE one-year Intensive diploma at the Woodroffe campus; and
- Home Childcare Training Certificate (approximately 230 hours) through Continuing Education at the Woodroffe campus and through distance education.

The ECCE diploma is recognized as the required educational qualification for staff in Ontario's regulated child care and nursery school settings.

Background/History

Both the ECCE program and Algonquin College have a philosophy of responsiveness to community needs. In particular, the ECCE Program Advisory Committee has attempted to represent the early childhood education/child care community. The committee has had an impact on ECCE program development, the Home Childcare Training Certificate program, the one-year Intensive ECCE diploma program and increased accessibility through the continuing education program.

The recent initiation of a child studies degree program at Carleton University has early roots in the university's former teacher education program (which terminated over 20 years ago), the psychology department and interested individuals from Algonquin College. Mutual goodwill allowed both institutions to work through the administrative challenges and offer ECCE diploma graduates from Algonquin (and other college programs) advanced standing in the child studies degree program.

Admission Requirements and Transfer of Credit

Admission requirements for the two-year ECCE diploma program include an Ontario Secondary School Diploma or mature student status. Eligible applicants are ranked according the results of an English comprehension exam and their interest and experience in ECCE and related programs.

Admission to the intensive one-year ECCE diploma program requires a social science university degree plus 2,000 hours of related work or voluntary experience in a structured group ECCE program. In effect, this program offers a transfer of credit for eligible degree-holders of one-year advanced standing in the ECCE diploma program.

Students who wish to transfer from continuing education to full-time studies or vice versa must make an application. If they are accepted (based on the achievement of passing grades), they usually receive full transfer of credit for courses completed to date.

Students who have completed the Home Childcare Training Program certificate can receive a transfer of one full course credit in the ECCE continuing education or full-time diploma program. In addition, students may negotiate for further partial course exemptions.

Algonquin College collaborated with Carleton University to establish a BA Child Studies, which requires an ECCE diploma for admission and offers advanced standing or transfer of credit equivalent to one full year of study. The Faculty of Education program at University of Ottawa designates 10 of its spaces in the second degree BEd Program for Algonquin ECCE diploma graduates who also have a university degree.

In September 1998, Algonquin College and Carleton University initiated a concurrent ECCE diploma/child studies degree program.

On the horizon, Algonquin College is looking at the professional development needs of the early childhood workforce. It is considering the possibility of a post-diploma program, which would include modules in administration, anti-bias curriculum, communication and team-building. The college is also exploring the potential of the transfer of credit for a post-diploma into university programs.

Program Description

The ECCE diploma program in the continuing education and full-time Family Studies Department include comparable studies. The learning outcomes of both delivery models at both campuses meet the requirements of the Ontario ECCE Program Standard. The program is organized into four semesters. The academic courses include a focus on child development, inclusive early childhood education curriculum and practices with children from birth to 12 years, family partnerships and professional practice. Students complete a minimum of 100 days or 20 weeks in three field placements. Students in the intensive ECCE diploma program complete 11 weeks in two field placements.

The Home Childcare Training Certificate Program includes eight academic courses in child development and home child care practices. Once the academic courses are completed, students complete a supervised 105-hour field placement in a home child care setting and an accompanying seminar.

Student Information

Approximately 85 students are accepted to the full-time ECCE diploma program and 35 to the Intensive ECCE diploma program each year. There are approximately 140 ECCE diploma program graduates each year from the full-time, intensive and continuing education programs.

Students often select Algonquin College to pursue studies in ECCE because it articulates to a degree program at Carleton and designated spaces in the teacher education program at University of Ottawa. The intensive program attracts students from out of town and out of province. While most of the students in the full-time ECCE program reside within the Ottawa-Carleton region or local rural communities, each year some students are attracted from Eastern Ontario and the Toronto area.

In 1997, the first year of the child studies degree program at Carleton University included 25 ECCE diploma graduates, most of whom were from Algonquin College.

The Home Childcare Training Certificate Program attracts family child care providers. While most graduates do not pursue studies in the ECCE program, they have the opportunity to receive advanced standing later.

Summary of Case Studies

The case studies highlight some of the successes and the challenges of Canadian ECCE post-secondary programs. Their experiences also suggest some potential strategies in advancing ECCE credit mobility.

Each of the case studies is an example of an ECCE program that provides students with opportunities to move credits from one type of program delivery to another, from one institution to another and from college programs to university programs. They are innovative because this is not standard practice in Canadian ECCE post-secondary education programs. In each instance, success represents a history of institutional and individual interest and passion in making accessibility and life-long learning an option for ECCE students and graduates. Each initiative has proceeded ahead of or in spite of province-wide transfer of credit policies.

The case study key informants described a number of challenges that their programs encountered (and may continue to encounter) in advancing ECCE credit mobility opportunities:

- A lack of societal recognition of the skills and knowledge needed to work with young children in early childhood settings;
- Significant variation among provincial/territorial requirements for staff qualifications in licensed child care settings;
- Reluctance of universities to recognize academic credits from college-level programs;
- Nonexistent or ineffective provincial/territorial-level mechanisms to facilitate transfer of credit between institutions; and
- Institutional bureaucratic and administrative policies and procedures related to admissions and registration.

Key informants suggested a range of strategies to enhance or increase the transfer of ECCE credits between and amongst colleges and universities.

- Once a few colleges become more flexible with transfer policies, others follow their lead (often to maintain and increase enrollment). Also, once a university establishes an articulation agreement with a college ECCE program, it becomes easier to extend this agreement to other college ECCE programs.
- The sharing of information about credit mobility within and across provincial/territorial boundaries leads increased awareness of the possibilities and to increased action to make them happen.
- The transfer of ECCE college credits to university-level programs adds value to college ECCE programs and indirectly adds value to the early childhood workforce.

One informant suggested that accreditation of ECCE post-secondary education programs was a long-term outcome while another suggested that it was a necessary next-step. In the first instance, accreditation is seen as an outcome of increased individual institutional initiatives and maturation of the child care/early childhood education workforce and sector. In the second case, accreditation is viewed as a structure for common evaluation and recognition of credits. In other words, the second perspective views accreditation as a next step to increase transfer of credit rather than as a long-term result of further collaboration.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The early childhood workforce in Canada faces an array of credit and credential mobility issues. The most immediate pressures come from those working with young children in regulated child care/early childhood education settings who wish to cross provincial/territorial boundaries and from those who wish to seek employment in related early childhood settings, particularly within the school system.

As the early childhood workforce seeks greater recognition, other credit and credential mobility issues will likely become more urgent. As training opportunities increase, family child caregivers who have completed family child care certificate programs may want to pursue further professional education. They will be seeking recognition for their completed academic credits and for their work experience. Early childhood intervention services from community-based compensatory programs to provincial/territorial early intervention programs often seek to employ individuals with ECCE credentials. Early childhood intervention will offer expanded career opportunities for the early childhood workforce if there is continued and more formalized recognition of ECCE credentials as the services evolve.

Opportunities and Barriers

The current policies and practices across Canada present both opportunities and barriers to increasing ECCE credit and credential mobility.

The opportunities include:

- A growing body of child development and neuroscience research evidence supports a professionally-educated early childhood workforce in all ECCE settings. In turn, this builds the momentum to establish common qualifications that can cross geographic and program boundaries.
- There is a climate of political and institutional will to coordinate education and labour mobility within jurisdictions and across provincial/territorial boundaries. Provincial and territorial governments recognize the need to address the barriers to the transfer of credits within post-secondary education. Initiatives now underway are increasing transfer of credit pathways.
- Current national initiatives support provincial/territorial consensus around labour mobility and related training and education qualifications. There is potential support for collaborative initiatives to develop pan-Canadian initiatives for ECCE credential mobility.

There are significant barriers to moving forward. These include:

- Staff qualification requirements for regulated child care/early childhood education settings evolved in each province and territory. There continue to be variations and contradictions which work against credential mobility.

- There are no provincial/territorial or national organizations that represent the majority of individuals with ECCE credentials.
- The varying structures of governance of colleges and the autonomous nature of universities make the system-wide transfer of credit agreements difficult.

Recommendations

The information collected from the provincial/territorial profiles and the case studies informs the following recommendations. In addition, national initiatives are considered, such as those by the Council of Ministers of Education Canada, the Canadian Child Care Federation and Human Resources Development Canada. Finally, the discussion and feedback from the project Steering Committee and researchers shape the recommendations.

Two initial broad recommendations emerge from the work to date:
- that pan-Canadian ECCE credentials for regulated child care and nursery schools be developed and recognized to ensure the portability of credentials across provincial and territorial boundaries; and,
- that the pan-Canadian ability to transfer credit between ECCE certificate, diploma and degree post-secondary education programs be developed and recognized.

These ambitious long-term recommendations are accompanied by short-term recommendations that identify a sequence of activities. In order to consider the short-term recommendations themselves, the following sections identify the key players and possible strategies to work towards the long-term recommendations.

Key Players

The national groups that have taken the initiative to carry this and other research projects forward are the key players in further possible activity to increase the transferability, articulation and portability of ECCE credentials.

Canadian Child Care Federation (CCCF)

In addition to sponsorship of this project, the CCCF is also working with provincial and territorial affiliate members to sponsor a major initiative on quality assurance, including consideration of occupational standards for the child care workforce. The CCCF sponsors Child & Family Canada, an on-line web site (www.cfc-efc.ca) and operates a national information service.

The CCCF's National Training Committee has been actively working to develop consistent, quality ECCE post-secondary education programs across Canada. Through a national consensus process, the committee developed guidelines for ECCE programs and a self-assessment tool for programs.

Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC)

The ACCC provides leadership and support for colleges across Canada. It is a voluntary organization representing the majority of publicly-funded community colleges, including cégeps and university colleges. ACCC is an information-sharing forum and government policy advocate, which supports member institutions in building partnerships with each other and with other national organizations and government.

Child Care Human Resources Steering Committee

Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) sponsored a sector study of child care. The final report, *Our Child Care Workforce: From Recognition to Remuneration,* was released in May 1998 and includes a recommendation to explore the feasibility of establishing a child care sector council. The Child Care Human Resources Steering Committee, supported by HRDC, is considering various options to move this recommendation forward, including increased collaboration among ECCE post-secondary programs.

Canadian Ministers of Education Council (CMEC)

CMEC provides a forum for collaboration and coordination among provincial and territorial ministers of education and their advisors. CMEC's third National Forum on Education focuses on transitions to life and its theme areas include early intervention and post-secondary education transfer of credit. CMEC has taken the lead in developing increased transferability among first- and second-year university programs and continues to monitor the transfer of credits within post-secondary institutions. CMEC is also coordinating a Working Group on Teachers Education, which includes the registrars of Canadian teacher education programs to develop criteria to recognize the portability of teachers' credentials across provincial/territorial borders.[29] This initiative is in response to the Labour Mobility Chapter of the Agreement on Internal Trade.

CMEC works on pan-Canadian strategies and consortium activities. All jurisdictions participate in pan-Canadian initiatives, while provinces and territories choose to participate in consortium initiatives according to their interests. One consortium project is the development of a process to set post-secondary expectations.

Strategies

The following strategies are the building blocks of a national system of coordinated credit mobility, including pan-Canadian portability of recognized ECCE credentials and pan-Canadian transfer of credit among ECCE post-secondary education programs. The first four strategies are immediate steps that could promote an increased transfer of credit. The last five represent longer-term actions to build more permanence in credit mobility and promote credential portability.

National Clearinghouse of ECCE Credential Information

Almost without exception, everyone contacted directly for information for this report requested a copy of the provincial/territorial equivalency procedures and the transfer of ECCE credit information as soon as possible. There is considerable interest among those in provincial/territorial governments, professional organizations and post-secondary education institutions for access to information on credit mobility in other jurisdictions.

The information changes often and needs to be updated on a regular basis. The ACCC has created an online database of ECCE post-secondary programs as part of this project. It has updated some information collected by the child care sector study survey of post-secondary institutions but more updating is needed. Further information about ECCE post-secondary programs, provincial/territorial equivalency processes, required and voluntary certification processes and a summary of ECCE credential requirements can be found on the Child & Family Canada web site at www.cfc-efc.ca.

National Forum of ECCE College and University Faculty and Registrars

A national forum of ECCE faculty is an opportunity to share information and build consensus on a common curriculum framework for ECCE programs. Key informants for this research project[30] and for the child care sector study recommended this type of information-sharing to build collaborative frameworks within ECCE programs. A national forum of registrars and administrators responsible for ECCE post-secondary education program could discuss common issues related to inter-provincial/territorial recognition of credits.

ECCE Transfer of Credit and Credential Consortium

The success of the CMEC pan-Canadian protocol for transferring first- and second-year credits in similar program areas between universities suggests this approach to interprovincial/territorial collaboration. There are a number of college certificate and diploma programs offering full transfer credit for courses and credentials completed at other institutions. They could come together to establish a transfer protocol that other programs could join later. A consortium could also provide a process for dialogue about credit and credential transfer among ECCE degree programs. The first step would be to identify and describe the curricula, graduate profiles and admission and credit transfer policies in these programs.

ECCE National Guidelines and Program Review

The CCCF Training Committee recently tested its self-assessment tool, *Towards Excellence in ECCE Training Programs*. It is revising the process and planning to proceed with a pilot test. The guidelines were developed after consultation with educators and ECCE practitioners across Canada and include learning expectations of students and requirements for the post-secondary learning environment.

The guidelines have pockets of support across Canada. The self-assessment process builds consensus among ECCE faculty members on about the components of quality ECCE post-secondary programs and the characteristics and abilities of ECCE graduates.

National Occupational Standard

An occupational standard refers to the skills, knowledge and abilities needed to perform competently in the workplace. It is a standard against which the qualifications of an individual in that occupation can be assessed.[31] National occupational standards for the early childhood workforce could identify and support credit mobility. They could also guide and inform common learning outcomes for ECCE post-secondary education programs.

The Canadian Technology Human Resources Board's National Technology Standards for applied science and engineering technicians[32] were developed by technology employers, practitioners and educators across Canada. They are used to guide educational and training programs, promote the recognition of qualifications and establish references for the accreditation of programs and professional certification. However, closer affiliations among various groups within the occupation may be necessary before moving forward on this initiative.

Pan-Canadian Definition of ECCE Credentials

The provincial/territorial requirements for staff qualifications in licensed child care programs have an impact on that jurisdiction's post-secondary ECCE programs. A pan-Canadian agreement on the definition of a qualified early childhood educator and the credentials required would increase credential portability. This, in turn, would influence the delivery of post-secondary programs.

Such a process could be supported by the development of a national occupational standard and discussion among provincial/territorial government officials responsible for child care policy and operations. The process could also consider how common ECCE credentials relate to other childhood services, such as early intervention and kindergarten programs.

Accreditation of ECCE Post-Secondary Education Programs

Accreditation is the recognition or status of an education program or service, indicating approval by relevant legislation and professional authorities that it has met pre-determined standards.[33] Accreditation is usually voluntary but failure to meet the standards of accreditation results in a penalty. Accreditation of professional education programs can provide a coherent framework for credit and credential transfer and portability.

Accreditation of ECCE post-secondary programs would be difficult to initiate on a national level at this time.[34] The current differences among provincial/territorial jurisdictions as well as variation in the ECCE post-secondary programs themselves would impede the development of standard accreditation criteria. Also, there is no professional organization that represents a significant proportion of the early childhood workforce to undertake the process of accreditation.

A national program of accreditation of ECCE post-secondary programs could evolve from the establishment of guidelines and self assessment in *Towards Excellence in ECCE Training Programs,* further sharing of information among programs, the development of a protocol for transfer of ECCE credits among post-secondary programs and a national occupational standard.

National Certification of Early Childhood Educators

Alberta, Ontario, Quebec and Nova Scotia have established voluntary certification for early childhood educators and there are proposals for required or mandated certification of individual practitioners through non-governmental, self-regulating bodies in British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland.

A national system of certification for early childhood educators could develop from these initiatives and current provincial/territorial government certification/credential approval procedures. It would set a standard for individual practitioners across Canada in all ECCE settings.

Endnotes

1 Dunning, 1997.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid, p. 65.

4 Dennison, 1995; Dunning, 1997.

5 Dunning, 1997.

6 Council of Ministers of Education Canada (CMEC), 1996; Dunning, 1997; Government of Ontario, 1997; Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC), 1998.

7 Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC), 1997a.

8 Biggs, 1996.

9 Patry.

10 Ibid.

11. Dunning, 1997.

12 HRDC, 1997b.

13 HRDC, 1997c.

14 Beach et al., 1998; Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC), 1997.

15 Beach et al., 1998.

16 ACCC, 1997.

17 British Columbia Articulation and Transfer Committee, 1998; Government of Ontario, 1990; Government of Quebec, 1996; Roblin, 1993.

18 Dennison, 1995.

19 Dennison, 1995; AUCC, 1998.

20 ACCC, 1997.

21 Dennison, 1995.

22 Shipley.

23 Trainer.

24 Childcare Resource and Research Unit, 1997; Beach et al., 1998; personal communication with provincial child care departments and organizations.

25 Pence, Zeigler.

26 Laliberte, 1993.

27 Kunderman.

28 Reynolds.

29 Belanger.

30 Morris, 1997.

31 HRDC, 1997b.

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Sensitivities in Processes of Peer Assessment of Training Programs in Caring Professions

by Barbara Thomas

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Abstract

High quality early childhood education services have been identified as important for the well-being of children, families and society. A cost-benefit analysis of child care concluded that a bigger public investment in quality child care would result in better life prospects for Canadian children and could be accomplished at comparatively low cost.

In order to have child care providers who understand children's developmental needs and provide activities that encourage children's skill development, excellent education and training programs need to be supported and maintained. Early childhood education programs are expected to prepare graduates to work with children and their families in a variety of settings within a changing social context. There continues to be a need for accountability in early childhood care and education (ECCE) due to changes that have occurred in enrolments, budgets and hiring policies.

Policy makers and the public are demanding performance-oriented standards and assessments to determine what teachers and students know and are able to do. Both qualitative and quantitative aspects need to be included in reviewing the goals and outcomes of the educational process. Educators may be understandably concerned and sensitive about the establishment of approaches to ensure accountability. In caring professions such as ECCE, where practitioners provide care and support to one or more people, the development of processes to address accountability presents some special challenges.

This paper assesses a range of sensitivities or concerns and identifies issues relevant to the review of ECCE educational/training programs. A process of program review based on peer assessment is proposed for monitoring and improving programs of study and enhancing the profession.

Introduction

High quality early childhood education services have been identified as important for the developmental well being of children and families, as well as the economic health of society.[1] Cleveland and Krashinsky recently conducted a cost-benefit analysis of child care and concluded that a bigger public investment in quality child care would result in better life prospects for Canadian children and could be accomplished at comparatively low cost.[2]

High quality child care refers to situations that support the well-being and development of children.[3] In order to have child care providers who understand children's developmental needs and provide activities that encourage children's skill development, excellent education and training programs are needed. Early childhood education programs are expected to prepare graduates to work with children and their families in a variety of settings and a changing social context.[4] In 1982, Stier noted that there was a need for ECCE accountability, due to changes that were occurring in enrolments, budgets and hiring policies. More than a decade later, this remains true.

There has been a universal move towards accountability in education. Wise and Liebbrand suggest that policy makers and the public are demanding performance-oriented standards and assessments to decide what teachers and students know and are able to do.[5] Both qualitative and quantitative aspects need to be included in reviewing the goals and outcomes of the educational process. Educators may be understandably concerned and sensitive about the establishment of approaches to ensure accountability. In caring professions such as ECCE, where a practitioner provides care and support to one or more people, the development of processes to address accountability presents some special challenges.

This paper assesses a range of sensitivities and identifies issues to consider in the review of ECCE educational/training programs and offers suggestions to address them. Sensitivities include training and education in a caring profession, training in an emerging profession and overall sensitivities.

The paper also looks at how a program review process, based on peer assessment and addressing the sensitivities, can be used to monitor and improve programs of study, promote their growth and development and enhance the profession. Possible approaches to the overall assessment process are suggested and policies and procedures to address some sensitive issues and potential conflicts are discussed. Goals and components of an ECCE program review are also outlined. Strategies for successful implementation of a peer review process are included and the benefits and risks are weighed. A draft proposal for the review process infrastructure is included in an appendix.

Potential Sensitivities for ECCE Faculty Considering Program Review

Issues Related to Training and Education in a Caring Profession

ECCE faculty have a variety of academic credentials—from diplomas to post-graduate university degrees—in addition to experience in the field. Faculty with less education may feel insecure about their credentials when program review is considered.

Educational programs for ECCE are relatively young compared with other professional programs. A significant body of research on which to build curricula and educational instruction is still evolving. Faculty may be concerned that approaches developed for the peer review of the educational preparation of well established professions will be applied to ECCE programs without considering their special needs and sensitivities. Some concepts and procedures from other professions will likely need to be adapted and modified to suit the specific needs of ECCE.

A sensitive area may arise in a program review situation, based upon differing value systems. For example, some faculty may emphasize the practical aspect of "how" over the theoretical focus of "why." As a result, they may feel insecure when participating in a review process that addresses both the theoretical and practical perspectives.

Teaching in ECCE programs is not comparable to teaching in most other college programs. Strategies must be developed to effectively teach students the distinct subject matter and to develop skills in observation techniques, interpersonal communication and maintaining responsive relationships. Since the effectiveness of such methodologies may not be readily measurable in quantifiable terms, faculty may question how the qualitative nature of the ECCE program can be meaningfully assessed in a peer review process.

Faculty may feel that they are faced with competing demands and question the effectiveness of a peer assessment program. They know that since societal changes affect education and the working life of people, it is essential that ECCE programs keep abreast of the changes. Contemporary students are advised to expect several job and career changes throughout their working lives. There are sensitivities related to how much education/training should be tailored to fit the present job market and current professional needs versus preparing students more broadly or diversely. The latter would enable them to develop skills to be flexible enough for career advancement or to adapt to future changes. While faculty members know that efforts to improve job satisfaction and reduce staff turnover may improve the quality of child care and enhance the professionalization of ECCE,[6] they are aware that broader, less job-centred programs are more expensive.

There is a concern related to the predominance of women in ECCE. In some areas, there is now a demand for more men to increase the diversity of views and provide role models for boys. If the assessment process identifies issues such as diversifying the student body, faculty or teaching methods, current faculty may resist program review fearing that it will lead to changes that could lead to job losses in favour of altered gender representation among faculty.

ECCE faculty have a complex body of knowledge drawn from many disciplines to impart to students in ways that are appropriate to the subject matter. For example students of early childhood education must be taught about role conflict as their work entails multiple roles and functioning in a complex environment. Faculty may feel that it would be too difficult to adequately address these complexities in a review process.

ECCE faculty provide a critical function in our society by preparing graduates to care for our most precious resource, our children. Faculty may be sensitive about efforts to establish a peer review process and perceive that it is an example of undervaluing the current programs that they have worked so diligently to establish.

Issues Related to Training in an Emerging Profession

Any changes or flexible options in the education of ECCE students may also raise sensitivity issues. For example, some institutions offer fast-track programs that allow students with undergraduate degrees to complete the ECCE program in one year. Faculty who lack university backgrounds may feel inadequate if called upon to teach this group. Program review might be particularly threatening to faculty in this position if they do not have adequate classroom and other support from administrators or from faculty with advanced credentials.

Child care does not currently have a high level of professional affiliation. Child care practitioners need to be encouraged to belong to professional associations.[7] This is in marked contrast to teachers in the school systems who have been educated and socialized with a strong professional identity. ECCE program faculty who are not active in their professional associations may be sensitive about whether they have a clear understanding of current requirements for practitioner competencies and/or contemporary issues in the field.

Faculty may feel sensitive about a program review expectation that all programs should be homogeneous, rather than valuing distinct aspects or components of their programs in which they have considerable pride. Although there are established standards for ECCE programs in some jurisdictions (e.g., College Standards and Accreditation Council) that may well be included in a review process, it is important that any process be sensitive to the unique characteristics of each program. For example, programs taking advantage of region's particular societal or cultural features or utilizing emerging technologies in organizing or delivering courses should receive recognition for these initiatives in a review process.

ECCE practitioners are generally more service-oriented than academically-oriented. Faculty and administrators of ECCE programs may view traditional programs of evaluation or accreditation as threatening, judgmental or potentially destructive. It is therefore important for faculty members to have representation from the beginning in developing the review process so that their program's values are appreciated, acknowledged and integrated.

Faculty may be sensitive to potential changes in faculty expectations or program focus resulting from an assessment process. For example, they may worry that recommendations could be made for restructuring the program or raising faculty qualifications.

Program review has the potential to enhance the standards of ECCE. Increased professionalization may result in a demand for higher pay scales. However, parents require low cost child care. If the cost of child care increases without adequate subsidy support, faculty may find that fewer children will be placed in regulated care, thus reducing the number of students (and graduates) needed. Fewer students would affect faculty job satisfaction and job security.

A related sensitivity concerns credentialism. If there are too many demands made on faculty to obtain increased credentials, there is the potential to escalate the costs of ECCE and child care. A demand for too highly-credentialed faculty could result in faculty pricing themselves out of the market.

Faculty may be sensitive about a lack of secretarial support and current computer equipment and facilities to produce quality documents in the time available. It is not uncommon for women-dominated service-oriented programs to be the last to receive technical upgrades when funds are limited. If faculty is lacking facilities that counterparts in high-profile programs have had for some time, this may add to their overall feelings of insecurity related to any assessment.

Faculty may fear that program review is particularly vulnerable in the present economic and academic climate of re-focusing and rationalization. Should any weaknesses be identified in the ECCE program, faculty may worry about being allocated the necessary resources. This concern is understandable in light of contemporary administrative enthusiasm for technology programs as opposed to service-oriented programs such as ECCE that have traditionally been undervalued.

Institutions that house ECCE programs may question the need for program assessment if the program has always been perceived as successful and fiscally responsible. Such questioning could lead to apprehension at the faculty level regarding the anticipated degree of administrative support for the assessment process.

Faculty may be anxious about the process by which the criteria for program review will be established, who will be involved in the process and the effect it will have on ECCE training. The criteria must be developed by credible and representative individuals or groups who are committed to improving the educational/training programs and promoting the growth of the profession. The criteria should not be viewed as arbitrary because they will form the basis for significant decision-making. For example, in the event that a weak program is exposed, faculty may fear program reduction or closure resulting in job loss.

General Concerns

Reviewers chosen to examine ECCE programs must include individuals who are knowledgeable about and credible within the profession, without being threatening to faculty members, students or staff in the practicum settings. They should be well oriented to the review process and able to provide a supportive assessment of the program under review, recognizing its strengths and weaknesses.

Faculty may be concerned that the financial resources (travel costs of reviewers, multiple copies of reports, etc.) spent on program review could be better spent on additional faculty, equipment, etc. They may believe that any tangible results of program review will be of little benefit to them or their students, whereas financial support to the program would be direct and apparent.

Preparing for any accountability exercise or program review is labour intensive. Faculty may feel that they and their support staff are already overworked and are apprehensive about taking on additional responsibilities.

Completing a self-evaluation report and other review documents requires a high level of organization and report-writing skills. Faculty may feel uneasy about their ability to undertake such activities.

Faculty may be anxious about their students participating in the assessment process and talking to reviewers on campus and in practicum settings during the site visit.

The review process should be structured to reduce sensitivities between programs. For example, colleges may compete for students from the same applicant pool or for faculty members from overlapping employment pools. To avoid such conflicts, reviewers should not be chosen from schools that are in competition with each other.

Conflict of interest is a potential issue. For example, faculty members who have graduated from a particular ECCE program, served on its faculty or as a consultant should not be review team members.

Rationale for A Formal System of Peer Assessment and Program Review

One approach to ensure that education and training programs in ECCE have high standards of pedagogical practice to provide nurturing and caring programs for the youngest members of society is to develop a program of peer assessment or review. ECCE programs combine theoretical learning with educational experience in supervised practica.[8] A systematic process of ECCE program evaluation, addressing both aspects of the program, can lead to improvements in the educational system and better quality graduates. It is important that educators are involved in establishing policy and setting standards for their profession.[9]

Although the peer review process may appear sensitive to faculty and institutions providing ECCE programs, experience from other professions indicates that there are a number of structures, policies and procedures to address these concerns. Educating and orienting ECCE faculty and administrators about the peer review process is essential. Barak and Breier indicate that the following principles have been highly related to successful programs of review: fairness, comprehensiveness, timeliness, good communication, objectivity, credibility and utility.[10] These principles are fundamental in the following discussion of sensitivities.

Suggested Goals of Program Review for ECCE[11]

1. To foster the continuous development and improvement in quality of ECCE educational programs throughout Canada.

2. To evaluate ECCE programs in relation to their stated purposes and objectives and the established criteria for program review.

3. To bring together faculty, administrators, practitioners and students in an activity directed toward improving educational preparation of early childhood educators.

4. To help set priorities for the allocation or reallocation of resources within a particular educational institution.

Components Frequently Included in Processes of Program Review

There are many ways to structure a program review process. The elements below are common to many processes of program evaluation.

PROGRAM REVIEW COMPONENTS[12]

- Preparation of a self-evaluation or self-study report by the program undergoing review to address criteria and provide a variety of data;
- Examination of self-study by the program review organization to evaluate the program's goals and objectives;
- Site visit by a review team comprising two to three external peer reviewers;
- Report of the review team that clarifies and validates data and assertions in the self-study;
- Opportunity for the institution to respond to the review team report;
- Examination by a Board of Reviewers of the self-evaluation report, the review team report and the response of the institution to the review team report in order to decide whether or not to grant approval;
- Opportunity for the head of the program to meet with the Board of Reviewers to clarify any issues or respond to questions;
- Decision by Board of Reviewers about granting or denying approval (if approved, a period of time is given along with any recommendations);
- Acceptance (or appeal) of the Board's decision;
- Dissemination of information on approval status of program.

Evolution of a Program Review Process

The above list of components provides an overall structure for a comprehensive review process. It may appear unduly complex for a field in which the review process is relatively new and perhaps sensitive. A user-friendly developmental approach that is phased in gradually may be most appropriate to promote growth, maximize mutual support among ECCE training programs and address concerns. Key concepts for the successful development and eventual implementation of an ECCE peer review process might be described as collaboration, inclusivity and mutual support. It would also be important to identify short- and long-term goals along with a proposed schedule. For example, it might be possible to design a two-stage process whereby programs that are to undergo a peer assessment could complete a preliminary stage (mini-review) to assess their readiness for the more comprehensive program review at a later date when the process has been refined. The notion of a mini-review would certainly be consistent with reducing the concerns discussed earlier. A similar concept, entitled "candidacy," has been used in nursing for new programs.[13]

The requirements for the mini-review might include preparing a shortened self-evaluation report that addresses some specific criteria or curriculum issues and identifying faculty and resource needs, student outcomes and employer satisfaction. Instead of a review team, there might only be one reviewer or "consultant" to make the site visit. This individual could have a more consultative role than a traditional reviewer. Alternatives for the site visit could also be considered, such as video conferences for interviewing faculty, administrators, students and/or practitioners from the practicum settings. If the necessary technological linkages are readily available, considerable cost savings could be achieved while preserving the integrity of the review process. Such an approach could be used to address sensitivities by increasing awareness and garnering support, while providing feedback about programs and process.

The mini-review would be an excellent vehicle for responding to sensitivities by orienting the ECCE emerging profession to the goals of program review. It could help build a broad consensus among programs on the characteristics and student outcomes of quality training. This evolutionary rather than revolutionary approach is compatible with many of the values espoused in ECCE training. It would provide an opportunity for the faculty to examine their programs and assess student and program outcomes, as well as strengths and weakness. It also allows for the development of skill and experience in marshalling resources and preparing assessment reports in various institutions. If evaluative data from this preliminary phase were gathered from participating programs, they could be very helpful in addressing the reliability and validity of the process. Such information would also be very beneficial in developing a more comprehensive or review process.

Policies and Procedures

As noted earlier, there are several ways to organize a review process and craft the relevant policies. This section presents some factors to consider in developing policies and procedures, regardless of the comprehensiveness or the number of phases that are ultimately approved for the final process. Professionals planning the process must be knowledgeable in a number of areas in order to encourage the achievement of excellence in ECCE programs, promote the growth of the profession and address some of the sensitivities previously identified.

Training and Education of a Caring Profession

It is essential that the review process be developed in a collaborative manner and involve ECCE faculty, heads of programs, practitioners across various geographical regions, etc. The collaborative approach could go a long way to address some of the ECCE sensitivities about distinct subject matter and teaching methodologies, an evolving body of research and variations in faculty credentials. Collaboration should be an intrinsic element in developing the content, criteria and procedures. Initial strategies could include:

- Organizing focus groups in several regions to gather data from ECCE faculty and practitioners. Questions should focus discussions on the essential criteria and types of processes that could best assist them in training students to provide high quality child care. The data elicited from focus groups at various locations could be analyzed and dominant themes identified for use in the collaborative planning process at the next level.
- Setting up committees or task forces to address specific topics within a time frame (e.g., several months). One committee could concentrate on developing criteria using the data obtained from the focus groups, literature review and other sources. It would be important to include examples or indicators of how the criteria will be measured or demonstrated in the review process. Programs could be given the opportunity to present both qualitative and

quantitative data to explain the depth and richness of their activities. Another committee could develop the data base that would be needed from each program (e.g., applicant pool, student attrition rates, graduate employment information, budget, facilities and faculty information).

Since ECCE faculty and department heads have a variety of credentials, it is important that an inclusive approach be taken to ensure that those with diplomas and degrees are represented in each planning group. The same approach should be used in choosing child-care-provider representatives. As the ECCE research foundation for curricula and instruction is still evolving, the planning group might want to study the processes that have been developed for other disciplines. Concepts and procedures related to the theoretical and practical areas could be modified to meet the critical issues in ECCE. Nursing is one example of a practice discipline that is primarily a women's profession. It has an established program of accreditation that has evolved over time[14] and might provide a model for ECCE.

Training in an Emerging Profession

In professional reviews, the role of the external peer reviewer is of paramount importance. Educational and experiential criteria for ECCE program reviewers should be clearly articulated and could include faculty with either degrees and diplomas. Regions or individual programs could submit the names and resumes of potential reviewers to establish a qualified pool. In setting up review teams of two or three faculty members to review a particular ECCE program, a balance in credentials, skills and experience would be considered. For example, reviewers' educational qualifications might be generally matched to the educational qualifications of most faculty in a program. As well, reviewers on a team should represent several different geographical regions with none being in close proximity to the program being reviewed. Such diversity in reviewers would help address the sensitivities between programs and institutions as well as valuing distinct program features that emphasize the cultural or other features of a region.

Another sensitive professional area concerns the decision-making body for the approval process. For helping professions, a board of review is often the responsible entity for deciding whether or not to grant approval to programs. Criteria for membership on the board is critical to addressing the faculty sensitivities in an emerging profession. For example, a board of eight would be large enough to be representative of several constituencies and geographical areas without being too unwieldy. Membership could include at least four members who are full-time faculty members in programs of ECCE to ensure strong representation of professional views. To address sensitivities regarding the service orientation of ECCE and professional affiliation, other members of the board could include a representative nominated by the Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC), a representative from a national service agency such as the Canadian Child Care Federation and a community or consumer representative such as a parent. A representative from a related discipline could also be considered.

Decisions are based on data. It is therefore important that sensitivities related to lack of skills, computer equipment and secretarial support be identified early on so that accurate, high quality reports are available for the decision-making body to use. Another facilitative strategy to support the emerging professionalism of ECCE is to provide an opportunity for the head of the program to meet in person or via telephone with the decision-making body. This has the benefit of allowing for clarification of issues or responding to questions at the time that decisions are being made. Reports can be further clarified by having a representative of the review team available by telephone if there are questions concerning the review team report. These options are probably particularly important in the early years of program review as experience is being gained and decision makers are trying to "do the right thing."

If a program review process is approved, a major communications campaign needs to be undertaken to ensure that college administrators, as well as ECCE faculty and practitioners, are made aware of the rationale and goals. Since there are resource implications at both the program and institution level, some advance planning and socialization activities are required if the process is to achieve administrative endorsement and faculty support. Orientation programs or workshops would provide faculty with an appreciation of the complementary relationship between their role in a peer review process (either as a potential peer reviewer or when one's program is preparing for review) and their professional responsibilities.

General Sensitivities

To ensure that reviews are carried out in a supportive manner and yet are able to identify strengths, weaknesses and opportunities for growth, an orientation program for a cadre of reviewers should be planned. Skills related to interviewing key people on site visits and writing reports would have to be included. Reviewers with experience conducting site visits could provide leadership to future review teams.

There are several ways of scheduling reviewers for a particular program. A pool of reviewers and their backgrounds can be maintained as a data base and updated annually or biennially. When reviewers are needed, a team can be chosen from the pool. As the process evolves, it would be wise to include one reviewer with experience on each team. In keeping with the proposed collaborative approach, programs should be advised of the names of the suggested reviewers for their program. However, they should be entitled to decline potential reviewers and ask for alternates.

In developing any program assessment plan, it is important that the process be pretested so that problem areas can be identified and clarifications made. Ongoing evaluation should also be an integral component in the formation of any review process. If an assessment program is implemented, a formal mechanism of gathering data and feedback from those involved at all levels (faculty and heads of college programs, reviewers and board of review members) should be established. As experience is gained, the process can respond to issues when they develop and remain current on developments in the field. Feedback can also be used to modify and streamline the process as it evolves. In order to save faculty time and resources during the preparation of reports, the use of computer-generated templates for data collection would be very helpful.

Potential Benefits and Risks of a Peer Assessment Process

Benefits

If the experience of other professions is any indication, ECCE faculty and heads of programs will find that the most helpful part of the review process is what they learn about themselves and their program through the self-evaluation process.[15] This self-reflective process has probably the greatest opportunity to result in improving programs and promoting growth because it comes from the grass roots of the program. Preparing the self-evaluation report may address sensitivities by reinforcing the need for resources and skills to support the program. It can also empower the faculty and foster development of the program through the validation and reinforcement of issues already known to them. External peer reviews can provide a fresh look at the issues and offer some clear objective perspectives to enhance programs.

On the interpersonal level, ECCE faculty with differing credentials may develop a more cohesive working relationship through their joint efforts on program review that will reduce sensitivities and overlap into other areas of teaching and college activities. From the institutional perspective, participation in the review process creates an awareness of the overall purpose of the institution and the role of the ECCE program within it.

Recommendations from the board of review can become priorities for change and future planning. If some modifications in the program are recommended, faculty can develop a timetable to address them in a coherent manner.

As more ECCE faculty participate in the review process as reviewers or when their own program undertakes review, the process will gain acceptance and credibility. This will promote growth at the program level and may lead to improved standards across Canada. The collaborative and growth-promoting nature of a program review may encourage weak programs to upgrade before undergoing review so that they will be more successful, thus improving the overall quality of programs available.

Successful results from an ECCE program review may address a number of sensitivities and result in the following benefits:

- consolidating the position of the ECCE program at the institution;

- supporting ECCE program requests for resources, faculty and staff;
- increasing confidence of faculty, students and the institution;
- promoting the ECCE program to potential students and future employers of graduates;
- justifying the maintenance of current budget allocation and even supporting requests for budget increases;
- publishing and achieving public recognition of the strengths/attributes of the ECCE program;
- being advantageous when negotiating for highly-valued practicum placements;
- highlighting ECCE in publicity and marketing plans of the college as a whole.

Risks

All assessment activities should be planned with the understanding that the process has some potential risks. For ECCE, some of the risks related to the sensitivities of an evolving profession may include a lack of resources to prepare a good report and carry out the site visit, coupled with a lack of expertise among the faculty to complete a first-rate review. Inexperience in the review process may result in faculty being divided over what should be included in the report. Emphasizing the positive aspects of the program while acknowledging the limitations may be difficult. Some faculty may feel that if one of their responsibility areas is identified as a weak, it will reflect badly on them as professionals. Another sensitivity related to a new process is the potential for the report and review process guidelines to be lacking or ambiguous, resulting in faculty becoming frustrated with the process. In a service-oriented profession like ECCE, faculty may experience lowered morale due to the increased workload and pressures associated with the review. If the report and overall review are prepared without the involvement of the faculty and students, the external reviewers may get conflicting views about the program.

A risk associated with the sensitivity regarding credibility of the process is that the results may not be used for any beneficial purpose after all the review work is done. Program review results may help colleges to decide whether or not to put additional resources into a faltering program. By the same token, negative results may be used to rationalize the reduction, combination or phasing out of programs.

Conclusion

This discussion paper has identified a range of sensitivities and issues related to the review of ECCE training programs. It also offers some suggestions on how a peer review process could address some of those sensitivities and could be used to improve programs, promote their growth and enhance the profession. With the rapid changes that are occurring in the education, social service and health care systems, peer assessment is one way to ensure that ECCE programs are ready to meet the challenges ahead, while ensuring quality care for the children of today who will become the leaders of tomorrow.

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9. Scannell and Wain, 1996.
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11. Adapted from National League for Nursing, 1990 and University of Wisconsin, 1995.
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APPENDIX

Draft Proposal for the Infrastructure of a Peer Assessment for ECCE

(adapted from *Accreditation Program,* 1995, by B. Thomas)

The infrastructure established for a peer review process usually comprises:
- Executive Secretary/Administrator;
- Board of Review; and
- Review Teams (made up of two or more peer reviewers).

Executive Secretary/Administrator

The Executive Secretary/Administrator should be sensitive to a variety of issues and is responsible for administering the overall review process and clarifying various aspects of the process. The administrator might be the only paid staff member, with members of the Board and Review Teams contributing their time as part of their professional contribution. The Administrator provides continuity in the process and manages the budget. Specific activities could include arranging for the orientation of Review Teams, organizing and coordinating the site visits, ensuring that report guidelines are followed, acting as secretary to the Board of Review and assisting the Board with responses to the programs.

Board of Review

The Board of Review is a decision-making body and responsible for deciding whether or not to grant approval to programs. Criteria for membership on this Board is critical to addressing the sensitivities of the faculty involved in the program review. A Board of eight members would be large enough to be representative of several geographical areas without being too unwieldy. Membership could include approximately four members who are full-time faculty members in programs of ECCE. Examples of representation from other relevant groups might include a national service agency such as the Canadian Child Care Federation, a community or consumer representative such as a parent, a representative chosen by the Association of Canadian Community Colleges and possibly a representative from a related discipline. The Executive Secretary/ Administrator could be a non-voting member of the Board.

Board Actions

Based on the appraisal of the program in relation to the criteria, the Board of Review decides on the approval status of the program. For example, a review process could be undertaken every three to five years, depending upon the condition of the program. Approval could be granted for a five-year period if the program is of good quality. Approval could be granted for a three-year period with specific recommendations to prepare a progress report to address identified concerns. Approval could be denied if the program does not present evidence that the criteria are being met. The program may reapply for the approval process at any time.

Review Teams

The primary role of review teams is to make recommendations about the program to the Board of Review. Teams use the self-study report as a base and look for congruency between the self-study report and the actual practices of the program. Members of the review team should not be former consultants, students or faculty of the program.

Chronology of Procedures for Program Review

1. Preparation of the self-study report. This report is used by the reviewers and the Board of Review as one of the primary documents of the evaluation of the program. The report is based on the program's response to the criteria.

2. Selection of the review team.

3. Site visit. The length of the site visit will range from three to five days, depending on the size and complexity of the program. The dates chosen should coincide with the full operation of the program, including classes and practical experience.

4. Completion of the review team report on its findings and clarifications in the self study.

5. Opportunity for the institution to respond to the review team report.

6. Examination of documents by the Board of Reviewers.

7. Opportunity for the head of the program to meet with the Board of Reviewers to clarify any issues or respond to questions.

8. Decision by the Board of Reviewers about granting or denying approval.

9. Acceptance or appeal of Board's decision.

10. Dissemination of information on approval status of program.

Language

For a national program, all documents would be available in English and French. Programs may submit their reports in either language.

Confidentiality

During the review process, all documents of the program, board and review team must be treated as confidential.

Appeal Process

When a program has been denied approval by the Board of Review, it should have the right to appeal the decision. An appeal panel, comprised of three members, would be established.

Why Focus On Children?

Environmental Contaminants and the Special Susceptibility of Children

by Sandra Schwartz and Graham Chance

Sandra Schwartz, MES, is the director of environmental programs and Graham W. Chance, MB, FRCP, FRCPC, is chairperson of the Canadian Institute of Child Health.

Abstract

Although the impact of environmental contaminants on human health has been widely studied, few reports in the Canadian literature have focused on the special susceptibility of children. Because of their rapid growth, physiologic and metabolic immaturity, the fetus and child are often at increased risk from the many potentially toxic substances in their environments. Furthermore, compared with an adult, children's greater air, food and fluid intakes relative to body weight increase the potential for excessive exposure. Children's behavioural and play patterns and their short stature also serve to increase their exposure to contaminants. The differences are especially pertinent in the context of potentially adverse effects of environmental contaminants.

This paper discusses why children are more vulnerable than adults to environmental hazards, what types of exposure affect children and which children are at particular risk. Lead, indoor and outdoor air quality and endocrine disrupters are examined in detail and the need to affirm the Precautionary Principle in the development of Canadian environmental legislation is stressed.

Environmental Contaminants and the Special Susceptibility of Children[*]

Many factors determine whether a child is born healthy and stays healthy into adulthood. (In this paper, the terms "child" and "children" refer to all stages—from fetus to pubescent youth.) These factors are interdependent and among them, the environment rates very highly. Because of their rapid growth, physiologic and metabolic immaturity, children are often at increased risk from toxic substances in their environments. Although the impact of environmental contaminants on human health has been widely studied internationally, few Canadian reports have focused on the specific vulnerability of children.

Exploring the links between child health and the environment provides a better understanding of why children are more vulnerable than adults to environmental hazards. Enhancing our understanding and knowledge of these links will create opportunities to improve our natural and built environments, thus protecting the health of children.

Our Promise to Children: Recognizing the Link Between Environment & Health

In May 1997, representatives of the seven major industrialized nations plus Russia developed the *1998 Declaration of the Environment Leaders of the Eight on Children's Environmental Health*. The declaration provides a framework for domestic, bilateral and international efforts to improve the protection of children's health from environmental threats. As a signatory to the Declaration, Canada pledged to give priority to children's environmental health issues related to lead, drinking water, air quality, environmental tobacco smoke, hormone disrupting chemicals and climate change. In addition, the leaders agreed to establish national policies that recognize the vulnerability of infants and children to environmental contaminants and to promote research on this topic. To date, Canadian leaders have done little to satisfy these commitments. Consequently, Canada is falling behind other countries, such as the United States, in creating protective policies for children.

In Canada, health standards and environmental programs have been developed with inadequate consideration of the unique susceptibility of children to environmental contaminants. This is cause for concern when one considers that there are more than 70,000 chemicals currently in use in North America and that number grows by about 1,000 per year.[1] Although some of these chemicals are known to have little or no health risk associated with them, little is known about the human health effects of the majority of these chemicals, particularly as they effect our more vulnerable populations. Much of the knowledge about the health effects of chemical exposure comes from wildlife and laboratory research on animals and from risk assessment and occupational exposure research involving healthy adult human males. Current standards are developed to protect adults, not children, and fail to reflect new information on children's environmental health.

A growing body of evidence demonstrates the wide array of child health problems that can be brought on and/or exacerbated by environmental exposure. The following examples are of some of the major environmental health problems affecting children:

- Asthma deaths among children and young people have increased during the last decade; asthma is now the leading cause of hospital admission for children in many countries.

- Children exposed to tobacco smoke at home have more days of restricted activity, bed confinement and missed school days each year than other children.
- Large numbers of children live within a few kilometres—or even on—a toxic waste dump.
- Many children are exposed to higher than average levels of ground level ozone as a result of living adjacent to high density traffic corridors and interchanges.
- Water pollution can affect children directly when they drink from or swim in rivers or lakes and indirectly when they eat contaminated fish.
- Children exposed *in utero* or following birth to pesticides, persistent organic pollutants, heavy metals and other chemicals may face disruption of their endocrine systems, stunted growth, mental disability and other neurobehavioural and developmental effects.[2]

Although exposure to some environmental hazards (such as lead from gasoline) have decreased because of regulations and standards, on the whole, children continue to be exposed to toxicants in the air, water and food because current policies do not consider children to be a specifically vulnerable population. Thus, we must consider why children are more vulnerable than adults, what types of exposure affect children and which children are at particular risk.

The Biological Context

Children are not just small adults, but a population with heightened vulnerability to a variety of exposures as a consequence of their developmental, behavioural and physiological characteristics.

On average, children receive greater exposure per unit of body weight than adults because they eat more food, drink more water and breathe more per unit of body weight than adults. For example, during the first six months of life, children drink seven times as much water per pound. Between the ages of one and five years, children eat three to four times more food per pound than the average adult and the air intake of a resting infant is twice that of an adult under the same conditions. In addition, their behavioural activity patterns and location closer to the ground further magnify their exposure to pollutants.

Furthermore, depending on their age, children's ability to metabolize, detoxify and excrete many toxicants is different from that of adults. Exposure during critical periods of development can result in irreversible damage to growing nervous systems and affect emerging behaviour patterns, cause immune dysfunction and have serious reproductive effects. For example, a frightening case in point was when a chemical plant was found to be discharging large quantities of methylmercury into the Minimata Bay in Japan. Infants whose mothers had eaten fish contaminated with methylmercury while pregnant showed severe congential brain damage and cerebral palsy.[3] Other studies have shown that exposure to methylmercury during prenatal development can cause blindness, deafness, seizures, abnormal reflexes, retarded motor development, learning, memory and psychological effects.[4]

In addition to developmental and physiological differences, children's behavioural tendencies often place them at higher risk from certain environmental hazards than adults. Young children pass through an intense oral phase, which may place them at risk as they explore their environments in and outside of the home. Soil consumption is common, especially if a child is iron deficient and may lead to the ingestion of relatively large quantities of soil, which increases exposure to heavy metals, pesticides and other pollutants. Chlorination of indoor swimming pools can lead to excessive inhalation of chlorine and nitric oxide for children who swim frequently. Also, because children are in the active learning phase but have diminished risk perception, they are at increased risk from pesticides used on gardens and fields and during play in polluted industrial sites.

Some populations of children are clearly at increased risk from high levels of contaminants in the environments where they grow. Children living in poverty and children living in racial or ethnic communities are at disproportionate risk of exposure to environmental hazards. At least some of the inequalities in health are due to inequities in access to healthy environments for children and their families. Children who live in poverty tend to live "downhill, downwind and downstream." Development of safe environments for *all* children, therefore, is an issue for parents, educators, communities and policy makers.

Selected Known Hazards for Children

On a daily basis, children face an abundance of environmental hazards from mercury, radiation, solvents, pesticides, sulfur dioxide and ozone, to name just a few. These fall into one or more categories, such as neurotoxins, endocrine disrupters, carcinogens and respiratory irritants. Lead, air quality and endocrine disrupters are discussed below.

Lead

Children are particularly vulnerable to the effects of lead exposure because it accumulates in the body. Lead can damage a child's developing brain, kidneys and reproductive system; even low levels are associated with reduced attention spans, learning disabilities, hyperactivity, behavioural problems, impaired growth and hearing loss.[5] One study indicated that early exposure to lead is associated with aggressive behaviour, delinquency and attention deficit disorders later in adolescence.[6] In addition, several studies have shown that exposure to lead may cause irreversible neurological damage with neurobehavioural effects and a significantly reduced IQ in children.[7]

Although Canada has reduced lead exposure considerably through more stringent regulations placed on gasoline and some consumer products, the current potential for exposure is still higher than in the United States, Sweden and Finland. These countries have continued to place more stringent restrictions on the use of lead in consumer products, such as the 0.02 per cent or 200 parts-per-million (ppm) advisory limit set by the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission for total allowable lead in children's toys and products. In Canada, there is currently no limit for the intentional addition of lead to products intended for children's use.

Similarly, Canada has lagged 20 years behind the United States, which banned the sale of lead-containing paint for all consumer use, institutions, public buildings, playgrounds and parks.[8] In Canada, the current requirement to use paint at less than 0.06 per cent (600 ppm) only applies to interior and exterior buildings frequented by children. "Frequented by children" implies that retail, commercial, office buildings, some areas in hospitals and some private homes are exempt and therefore allowed to use lead-containing paint. This designation is not protective of public health because buildings and properties can be sold or used by groups including children or pregnant women, who also must be protected from lead exposure.

In addition, the sale of lead-containing exterior paint is currently permitted provided there is a warning label on the container. The label does not prevent consumers with children from buying lead-containing exterior paint. In a 1991 evaluation of the regulations for lead and mercury content in paints, eight per cent of consumer respondents had used exterior paint on interior surfaces.[9] One manufacturer had used lead pigment in exterior paint at a level of five per cent (50,000 ppm) and another had used lead pigment in an exterior stain for wood at a level of 20 per cent (200,000 ppm).[10]

Lead-based paint in older homes is still the most common source of high-dose lead exposure for young children. Childhood lead exposure can occur through ingestion of paint chips or dust from deteriorating surfaces, chewing on painted cribs or inhalation of lead paint dust produced by sanding during renovation.[11] Figure 1 illustrates known exposure routes for lead. Lead is also found in drinking water as a result of older lead-soldered plumbing and in soil containing lead residues from automobile exhaust.[12]

Globalization of trade means that consumer goods which may contain lead, such as crayons, toys, mini-blind window coverings and dishes, can be imported into Canada or purchased by Canadians abroad. For example, a few years ago, PVC mini-blinds manufactured with lead additives were being sold across Canada, with extremely high levels of lead dust being found on their surfaces. Similarly, in 1994, the American Consumer Product Safety Commission and the Canadian Product Safety Division of Health Canada found several brands of imported crayons containing enough lead to present a lead-poisoning hazard to young children who might eat or chew on the crayons.

Although many Canadians have openly criticized the government for failing to regulate these products and despite a voluntary recall and public advisory being issued, the main problem lies with the lack of comprehensive regulations for the use of lead in products and materials to which children may be exposed. Canada is working to establish a lead strategy to adequately protect children from exposure to this toxic metal but is well behind other developed countries. Given that no clearly-defined "safe threshold" has been established, efforts to reduce lead exposure must continue.

Air Quality

Due to a complex mixture of compounds, air pollution can vary, depending on local sources and winds carrying pollution from long distances. Major air pollutants include sulphur dioxide, particulate matter, nitrogen oxides, acid aerosols and ground level ozone. Lower respiratory symptoms, such as shortness of breath, wheezing and chest tightness, are strongly associated with increases in particulates and oxidizing gases, such as ozone and nitrous oxide.[13] Clear links have been found between air pollution and respiratory disease in children.[14]

Young children require more air per kilogram of body weight than adults and, therefore, inhale more pollutants. Children spend more time engaged in vigorous outdoor activities compared to adults and as a result, the places in which they play and the level at which they breathe increase their chances of exposure. For example, children spend a large portion of their time actively playing in urban parks and school grounds, resulting in high levels of exposure to vehicular pollutants.[15] One study found that inner-city children who participated in afternoon street activities had blood levels of benzene, a known carcinogen, as high as levels that might be found in workers in the petrochemical industry.[16]

Although the health effects associated with outdoor air pollution are becoming increasingly apparent, it is important to recognize that indoor air quality may also be having long-term effects on the health of children. The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) claims that indoors, levels of certain pollutants can be two to five times higher than the levels found outdoors. In some instances, these pollutants can reach up to 100 times higher. Moreover, the Science Advisory Board of the EPA claims that indoor air pollution is one of the top five environmental hazards to human health.[17]

The fact that Canadian children spend almost 90 per cent of their time indoors heightens this concern. For children, the most important indoor environments are the home, day care and school. Clearly for some children, ice rinks, malls and other indoor recreational sites are also important indoor environments. In view of the fact that children spend so much of their time indoors, it is troubling to note that in Canada, there are currently no regulations targeting air quality in these locations.[18]

There are six main categories of indoor air pollution: respirable particles, nitrogen dioxide, volatile organic compounds, semi-volatile organic compounds, infectious and allergic agents and carbon monoxide.[19] There are many sources of these pollutants in indoor environments including building materials (such as particle board and insulation), upholstery and furnishings (such as carpets, curtains and wall decorations), appliances (such as gas stoves and kerosene heaters), handicrafts, cleaning agents and second-hand smoke.[20]

Although indoor air pollution is linked to various effects on the respiratory system, many of these indoor pollutants are now being recognized as either causes of asthma or triggers for the disease. A recent Statistics Canada study confirmed a four-fold increase in childhood asthma over a 20-year period, with hospital admission data mirroring this increase.[21] While there is debate as to whether this increase might be due to over-diagnosis, there are a number of international studies suggesting that changes in the environment may be contributing to the increase.[22] Risk factors for the development and aggravation of childhood asthma have been identified as exposure in infancy to biological contaminants (such as moulds,[23] animal dander and dust mites) and to chemical contaminants (such as environmental tobacco smoke and gases from combustion appliances).

It has been suggested that the increase in asthma prevalence might be due to increased exposure to allergens and toxicants resulting from the circumstances of modern living. For example, the extent to which indoor air environments are contaminated depends on the design of the building, the building materials used, the ventilation systems installed and the degree to which a building is maintained. In recent years, well-intentioned efforts at energy conservation have led to poor indoor air quality, especially in older buildings.[24] Combined with toxic cleaning and pest control products, synthetic building materials and furnishings, the potential for exposure to contaminants indoors is increasing. Furthermore, a vast range of contaminants, including heavy metals, pesticides, benzene and other pollutants, can enter a building through the air, on clothes and on footwear.[25]

Given the vulnerability of children to the effects of environmental contaminants and the potential health risks associated with indoor environments, a concerted effort to reduce exposure to indoor pollutants needs to become the focus of more research and policy action.

Endocrine (hormone) disrupters

A growing body of evidence suggests a number of synthetic and naturally occurring organic chemicals (such as phtyoestrogens,[26] dioxins, PCBs, phthalate esters and DDT) may disrupt the endocrine (hormonal) systems of humans and wildlife. Children may be at a particularly high risk from even very low levels of endocrine-disrupting chemicals because of the importance the endocrine system plays in child development.

Endocrine disrupters are substances that enter the body and adversely affect the way body systems communicate with each other. Endocrine disrupters can cause problems if they:

- block natural hormones from binding with their cell receptors;
- mimic natural hormones and bind to the receptor;
- alter the production and availability of natural hormones and receptors; and
- affect transport of hormones in the blood and across membranes.

Presently recognized endocrine disrupters interfere primarily with three hormonal systems: estrogen (the female hormone), androgen (the male hormone) and thyroid. These three hormones play a critical role in the development and function of the brain, the immune system and the sexual and reproductive system. Exposure to these chemical hormone imposters during sensitive developmental periods may put children at greater risk of chronic effects that are noted only after a long latency period.[27] For example, even low level exposure to certain contaminants (such as dioxins, before and during pregnancy) has long-lasting effects on the reproductive success of offspring and may interfere with the development of the second generation after exposure.[28]

Evidence of health effects associated with endocrine disrupters has come primarily from wildlife studies, such as gross birth deformities and decreased fertility rates in birds, fish and mammals living in the Great Lakes region. Despite these reported health effects, some which were noticed 50 years ago, the potential for effects in humans has only recently become acknowledged.[29] Human health effects believed to be linked to endocrine-disrupting contaminants include testicular cancer,[30] undescended testes and hypospadias, decreased sperm count, breast cancer and infertility. Endocrine-disrupting contaminants and their exposure routes are listed in Figure 2.

With very few exceptions, however, there is insufficient evidence to establish a direct causal link between exposure to these chemicals and specific human health outcomes. Nevertheless, further research into the potential effects of endocrine-disrupting chemicals is needed and precautionary action is required. The risks from these insidious and ubiquitous hazards could mean that generations of children will be born with gross deformities, impaired intellectual development and an affected reproductive system. It is imperative, therefore, that the Canadian government take action to support research in this area and to launch new initiatives in order to protect children from these hormonally-active chemicals.

CREATING HEALTHY ENVIRONMENTS FOR CHILDREN

Adapted from *Hidden Exposures: A Practical Guide to Creating a Healthy Environment for You and Your Children* by the South Riverdale Community Health Centre, 995 Queen St. E., Toronto, Ontario, M4M 3P3, tel: (416) 469-3917.

Child care providers, educators and parents play a vital role in identifying and providing safe and healthy environments for children. Several measures can reduce children's exposure to contaminants.

INDOOR CONTAMINANTS

Mild allergic reactions to contaminants can include hyperactivity, irritability, fidgeting, distraction and temper tantrums. Poor indoor air quality produces an unfavourable learning environment for children and their caregivers. Indoor sources of contaminants include building materials, furnishings, cleaning agents, printing and copying devices, moulds, bacteria and viruses. Most buildings have some or all of these but there are ways to improve indoor air quality.

- All surfaces should be easy to clean.
- Replace wall-to-wall carpeting with rugs that can be regularly washed in hot water.
- Roller shades are better than drapes and mini-blinds, which attract dust and moulds.
- Cleaning products can be harmful if swallowed, but children can also be affected by breathing and touching these products.
- Particles from aerosols, plug-in air fresheners and deodorizers may be easily inhaled and can irritate the eyes, nose, throat and lungs.
- Some all-purpose cleaners and disinfectants contain corrosive chemicals that can burn the eyes and skin and have also been associated with nervous system damage.
- Water-based detergents and cleaners are often less harmful.
- Baking soda and hydrogen peroxide can be mixed together to remove stains, disinfect, deodorize and whiten.
- To keep the indoor environment clean, smoking should be discouraged because environmental tobacco smoke poses a major health risk to children.
- Most toys are not labeled with ingredients that may be harmful.
- Dust and mould in stuffed toys can trigger asthma or allergic reactions.
- Toys with painted surfaces may contain heavy metal pigments such as lead.

ARTS AND CRAFTS SUPPLIES

- Paint may contain lead or other toxic heavy metals that can be fatal if large amounts are swallowed.
- Solvents found in some paints and glues may irritate the skin, eyes and lungs.
- Clay may contain talc and talc may contain asbestos, which is carcinogen.
- Clay dust can irritate the lungs.
- Talc may cause breathing problems if inhaled.
- Permanent markers may contain toluene or other toxic solvents, which can irritate eyes and skin and may cause damage to the brain and heart.

PLASTICS

Polyvinyl chloride (PVC, also known as vinyl) is a type of plastic commonly used in bath toys, squeaky toys, teething rings and many other consumer products. Potentially toxic chemicals are added to the PVC to change its natural characteristics. Phthalates are chemical plasticizers that are added to infant toys that will be chewed and sucked, in order to make the PVC soft and flexible. Heavy metals, such as lead and cadmium, are added to make the PVC more durable. Cadmium causes kidney damage and has been shown to cause cancer in animal studies.

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Phthalates are not bound to the plastic and can migrate out of infant toys that are chewed and sucked and can be ingested by the child. Scientific studies have confirmed that exposure to phthalates can lead to liver, kidney and nervous system damage. These chemicals are hormonally active and may interfere with hormone systems that regulate normal growth and development in children.

To make PVC more durable, lead and cadmium are added to some products. When exposed to heat and sunlight, the lead is released as a fine dust on the product's surface and can easily be ingested. This dust is so fine that it cannot be vacuumed and requires a damp cloth to remove it.

- Plastic containers should not be used in the microwave because the chemicals may leach out into the food. Use glass, china or ceramic dishes instead.
- Baby bottles should be heated in hot water.
- Teethers made from PVC plastic should be replaced by fabric teethers, biscuits, or wet washcloths and hard plastic toys should replace soft plastics ones.

PESTICIDES

Pesticides are products registered by the federal government to control insects (insecticides), weeds (herbicides) and rodents (rodenticides). Some pesticides are selective and attack only the systems of the organism for which they are intended. However, other pesticides are not as selective and can be harmful to humans.

Children may be exposed to pesticides around the home, day care or school from lawns, gardens and swimming pools. Children can accidentally ingest improperly stored or discarded pesticides. Children can also be exposed to agricultural pesticide residues in their food and drinking water and pesticides can be tracked indoors on shoes or toys.

Some of the health effects associated with pesticides include allergies, rashes, cancer and hormonal and reproductive problems. Children are more vulnerable to breathing in and swallowing the harmful chemicals used in these products. .

PROTECTING CHILDREN INDOORS

- Dust and vacuum throughly and regularly.
- Use non-toxic cleaning products.
- Use tempera, water-based, odourless, non-toxic paint.
- Use talc-free and pre-mixed clay.
- Use watercolour markers instead of permanent felt-tip markers.
- Regularly wash and dry stuffed toys to avoid an accumulation of dust and moulds.
- Use hard plastic or wooden toys painted with non-toxic pigments instead of soft plastic toys.

PROTECTING CHILDREN OUTDOORS

- Protect children from the sun with sunscreen and/or long sleeves, pants and hats.
- Do not apply sunscreen to children younger than six months old; dress infants in appropriate clothing and limit their exposure to the sun.
- Make sure that exterior paint is not chipping or peeling because most exterior paints contain lead.
- Avoid using pesticides on lawns and gardens.
- To protect children from insect bites, dab white vinegar, oil of citronella or pennyroyal mint behind the ears, knees and wrists, instead of using insect repellant.
- Reduce children's exposure to automobile exhaust by making a "no idling zone" at schools and day cares during pick-up and drop-off.

Applying the Precautionary Principle

Despite the now widely-recognized susceptibility of children to environmental hazards and the increasing focus on the effects of certain contaminants on child health, much uncertainty remains.

There is presently limited consensus among scientists and governments on if or how exposure to toxic chemicals in the environment results in damaging health effects. In many instances, as in the case of endocrine-disrupting chemicals, there is a lack of conclusive data on human populations of direct causal links. This lack of information makes it difficult for government agencies to confront the problem because of the belief that responses must be based on incontrovertible, direct scientific evidence which commercial interests cannot refute.

Most studies to date have lacked a multidisciplinary approach and thus miss the complexity of the exposure-disease association. It is often extremely difficult to causally associate health problems that may result from multiple low levels of exposure, especially if the resulting health problems occur after long latency periods and have no features that specifically identify the cause as factors in the environment. However, a lack of scientific certainty or absolute proof of association must not be a reason for inaction: whole populations could be placed at risk.

Since children have more future years of life than most adults, they have more time to manifest diseases. Today's infants and young children can expect to be around for 75 to 80 years and the health consequences of exposure to environmental contaminants could affect them throughout their life.

The Precautionary Principle recognizes that we must act preventively in the face of uncertainty, erring on the side of caution. This must be the basis for all environmental and health legislation. The principle was endorsed at the UN Conference on Environment and Sustainable Development, held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, and has already been implemented in some European and American regulatory systems.

According to the Precautionary Principle, when substantial evidence of any kind gives good reason to believe that an activity, technology or substance may be harmful, we should act to prevent harm. Often, we must rely on the total weight of evidence from observations, case studies and extrapolated data from dose/response studies in order to hypothesize a potential health risk. If we always wait for scientific certainty, effects on the fetus and child and long-term consequences for child or adult health may be the outcome.

Unfortunately, the Precautionary Principle has not yet been institutionalized in Canada. It is alluded to in newly-proposed environmental protection legislation but is not the basis of the new act and is not mentioned in any health protection policies.

Protection of Canadian children from environmental hazards requires a strong political commitment. In the United States, the Executive Order signed by President Clinton on April 21, 1997 to reduce environmental health and safety risks to children requires "each Federal agency [to] make it a high priority to identify and assess environmental health risks and safety risks that may disproportionately affect children; and [to] ensure that its policies, programs, activities and standards address disproportionate risks to children that result from environmental health risks or safety risks."

In May 1997, in recognition that children have a special vulnerability to many toxins, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) established the Office of Children's Health Protection to support the Agency in implementing the President's Executive Order. The office's mission is to make the protection of children's health a fundamental goal of public health and environmental protection and it recently saw the establishment of eight Centers for Children's Environmental Health and Disease Prevention Research.

In order to protect children from environmental threats, we need similar child-centred protection strategies in Canada. The establishment of an Office of Children's Environmental Health Protection would aid in promoting the Precautionary Principle by

- determining the existing body of knowledge and identifying key information gaps in children's environmental health issues;
- ensuring that current scientific information is widely disseminated;
- promoting research and policy development; and
- identifying opportunities for coordination with other agencies.

As we try to determine how much chemical contaminants are contributing to increased infertility, learning disabilities, asthma and cancers and what effects the transportation, energy and agricultural sectors (to name just a few) are having on human health and global change, it is important to keep in mind that scientists keep finding significant, often permanent, effects at surprisingly low doses. In order to protect the health and well-being of children, we need to develop environmental targets and enforceable legislation, despite existing uncertainties and the need for more environmental health research.

Conclusion

Children differ from adults in many important ways as a consequence of their growth and development. These differences can render children, especially the fetus and young child, more vulnerable to environmental toxicants than adults. It is therefore essential that policies and standards for the evaluation and use of chemicals in the environment take account of these differences in order to protect the immediate and long-term health and safety of today's children.

Children's environmental health protection policy must not await definitive proof concerning key issues, but must recognize the likelihood that such data will not be available before critical decisions must be made. Despite vigorous research, demonstrable causal associations between exposure to specific environmental agents and health effects may not be established beyond all doubt.

Thus, scientific evidence of causal effect should not be the only determining factor in regulatory action. Decisions on pollution prevention to protect child health must be taken on the basis of inadequate knowledge. When factual empirical information is not available, the estimation of health impact will require the summation of all available evidence and include modeling, extrapolation, prediction and estimation of worst-case scenarios, followed by the application of the Precautionary Principle for the development of policies and legislation. Uncertainty is endemic within environmental health research; therefore, action on developing environmental targets through enforceable environmental legislation is presently needed to protect the health and well-being of Canadian children.

FIGURE 1

EXPOSURE ROUTES FOR LEAD

Exposure Medium	Exposure Route
Water	• tap water • lead-based home plumbing
Air	• emissions from manufacturing plants • hobbies, crafts and leisure activities • occupational exposure • environmental tobacco smoke (ETS)
Food	• produce from contaminated soil • ceramic and glassware • lead-soldered cans • infant formula
Soil, dust and paint	• ingested contaminated soil • dirt and dust in the home • paint dust and chips from buildingsdeterioration or renovation • imported PVC miniblinds (pre-1997)

Source: *Environmental Contaminants and the Implications for Child Health: Literature Review*, Second Draft (Canadian Institute of Child Health, 1998), pp 59.

FIGURE 2

ENDOCRINE DISRUPTERS AND EXPOSURE ROUTES

Type of Contaminant	Examples	Exposure Routes
Pesticides	• DDT and its catabolite DDE • alachlor • atrazine • tocochlorophene • chlordane	• food • pets • recreational areas
Wood preservatives	• pentachlorophenol	• houses, daycare centres and schools
PCBs dioxins	• co-planar PCBs • TCDD and others	• insulators • pesticides • incinerators gases
Plasticisers / surfactants	• phthalates • polycarbonates • styrenes	• plastic products
Mycoestrogens	• zearolenone	• produced by moulds
Phytoestrogens	• estrogens	• produced by plants like soya

Source: *Environmental Hazards: Protecting Children* (Ottawa: Canadian Institute of Child Health, 1998), pp 11

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